IRELAND
A NATION

944.5

LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM
LIBRARY SERVICE

Author

Title

BOOK STORE

Books or discs must be returned on or before the last date stamped on label or on card in book pocket. Books or discs can be renewed by telephone, letter or personal call unless required by another reader. After library hours use the Ansafone Service (01-698 7347). For hours of opening and charges see notices at the above branch, but note that all lending departments close at 1 pm on Wednesday and all libraries are closed on Sundays, Good Friday, Christmas Day, Bank Holidays and Saturdays prior to Bank Holidays.

METROPOLITAN
SPECIAL COLLECTION

IRELAND A NATION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

OLD AND NEW MASTERS

IF THE GERMANS CONQUERED ENGLAND

THE BOOK OF THIS AND THAT

RAMBLES IN IRELAND

HOME LIFE IN IRELAND

IRISH AND ENGLISH

IRELAND A NATION

BY

ROBERT LYND

"In Paris our statesmen have dealt with racial problems, like that of Ireland, and in every way as difficult as the Irish problem. They may not shrink from applying to Ireland the same medicine that they have applied to Bohemia and many another part of Europe."

GENERAL SMUTS.

LONDON
GRANT RICHARDS LTD.
ST MARTIN'S STREET
MDCCCCXIX

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE RIVERSIDE PRESS LIMITED
EDINBURGH

TO

CLIFFORD SHARP

My dear Sharp,

May I dedicate this book to you, even though I feel sure you will disagree with much that it contains? I do so mainly in friendship, but also partly because it seems fitting to address this cold-blooded appeal to reason on behalf of Irish nationality to one who, like yourself, is brilliantly free from all appearance of sentimentality, and audaciously reasonable.

I am, yours ever,

Robert Lynd.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Why it is important to realise that Ireland is a Nation	9
II.	The Historical Thread: How Ireland helped to civilise Europe	21
III.	The Historical Thread: A Nation Under one King	28
IV.	The Historical Thread: The New Irish Nation	36
V.	The Historical Thread: The Worst Century of All	46
VI.	Sinn Fein	53
VII.	The Insurrection of 1916	62
VIII.	Ulster: The Facts of the Case.	76
IX.	The Hesitating Sort of Liberal and Irish Self-Determination	82
X.	One Man's Views on Dominion Home Rule	101
XI.	The Irish Soldier	109
XII.	Ireland's Record in the War	117
XIII.	The Soldiers' Sacrifice	124

CHAPTER PAGE

XIV. The English in Ireland: A Scene . 131

XV. Another Scene: The Drums of Ulster 138

XVI. The Witness of the Poets . . . 148

XVII. A Note on Irish Literature . . . 157

XVIII. Voices of the New Ireland:
(1) P. H. Pearse and his Writings . 182

XIX. Voices of the New Ireland:
(2) Mrs J. R. Green 190

XX. Voices of the New Ireland:
(3) A. E. 197

XXI. Voices of the New Ireland:
(4) T. M. Kettle 213

XXII. Voices of the New Ireland:
(5) Dora Sigerson 222

XXIII. Common-Sense about the Little Nations 228

XXIV. Epilogue 235

CHAPTER I

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO REALISE THAT IRELAND IS A NATION

THE English attitude to Ireland is somewhat paradoxical. Englishmen can hardly be said to dislike the Irish personally. On the whole, I think, they like them better than they like most foreigners. They like them, however, as a holiday people rather than as a serious people. Even the most fanatical Irishman who, without the faintest gleam of humour in his composition, gives his life for a passionate ideal, is explained away as a person with a hilarious love of fighting for its own sake. In the early days of the war *Punch* had a drawing of an Irishman to whom someone says: "This is a terrible war, Pat." "Yes, sorr," replies the Irishman, "'tis a terrible war; but, sure, 'tis better than no war at all," I do not think it is unfair to suggest that this joke vividly represents a common English view of the Irish character. Set out with the idea that the Irishman is an irresponsible creature, and you do not need to take anything he says or does quite seriously. If he says he wants a republic, one does not need to consider his demand, for he obviously does not mean it. If he gives his life in the armies of the Allies, it is not because he is a soldier of freedom, but because he is always spoiling for a fight. If he gives his life on the Republican side, well, boys will be boys. If the Irish had not the Germans or the English to fight, we are told, they

would fight each other. Is not Ireland the nation of the shillelagh—that knotted bludgeon which is never seen in Ireland except in the windows of shops that cater for the tastes of tourists? How is it possible to regard Paddy with the shillelagh as a potential Abraham Lincoln—a statesman with a constructive mind, tolerant, prudent, and endowed with the civic and commercial virtues? All such a happy-go-lucky creature needs is to be ruled with a firm hand. He is like a high-spirited animal that only becomes naughty if ridden with a loose rein. What he requires is firm and expert horsemanship. The whole theory of English government in Ireland, so far as it has a theory, depends upon the belief that the Irishman is a fine specimen of animal, but not a fine specimen of man.

There could be no more fatal belief than this in politics. If persisted in, it will bring ruin not only on Ireland but on England, and on our European civilisation generally. If Ireland is not taken seriously and given her freedom equally with every other nation in Europe, another great world-war is as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun. This may at first sight seem a ridiculous statement; and it would, I agree, be ridiculous to pretend that the Great Powers will ever deliberately make war for the sake of freeing Ireland. If one recalls the immediate origins of the war of 1914, however, one will see how easily the seeds of war grow in little oppressed countries. The last war had many causes, but the immediate cause that precipitated it was an accident to an archduke in the little Bosnian town of Serajevo—a town about one-tenth the size of Dublin. Another of the immediate causes of the war was certain happenings in the Irish cities of Belfast and of Dublin itself. Had Sir Edward Carson, with the aid of the English Tory Party, not

been conspiring to destroy the liberties of Ireland by arms, Germany would not have been deceived as to the part England would play in the war, and it is possible the Kaiser might have held his hand—held it, perhaps, long enough to enable democracy to defeat militarism in Germany, and so prevent the bloody disaster of war altogether. The evidence for the part played by the conspiracy against freedom in Bosnia and Ireland is not the evidence of political partisans. It is known to everybody. It is to be found in the writings of Mr Gerard, the American Ambassador, and many others who can speak with authority. Sir Edward Carson has denied indignantly that Baron von Kühlmann was over in Ulster as the guest of the Unionists on the eve of the war. What everyone knows is that responsible Germans were sent to spy out the land in Ulster at that time, and that the services of a German were made use of in drilling Sir Edward Carson's Volunteers. What one also knows is that the Carsonite arms were got from Germany, and it is reasonable to suppose, remembering the German genius for espionage, that they did not leave that country without the connivance of the German Government. One also knows that, when Sir Edward was in Germany not long before the outbreak of the war, the Kaiser had him to lunch with him. When Sir Edward was accused in the House of Commons of having dined with the Kaiser, he said it was an infamous falsehood. True, he did not dine; he only lunched. That makes an immense difference. Now, I am not going to pretend that Sir Edward Carson was ever a pro-German, though Mr Redmond would have been denounced as one on a hundredth part of the evidence. I am recalling those things, not as proofs of Sir Edward Carson's interest in Germany, but of Germany's interest in Sir Edward Carson. Sir Edward's con-

spiracy against the Irish nation gave Germany yet another seemingly valid reason for declaring war. If Ireland had been free, Germany's reasons for declaring war would have been by so much the weaker. I wonder if even Mr Bonar Law would have raised a finger to oppose Irish freedom if he had known that by so doing he was helping to doom millions of young men to death and torture beyond telling, and scores of thousands of women and children to pain and fear and starvation, and massacre by land, sea and air.

And yet every statesman — nay, more, every citizen—who assists or even acquiesces in the perpetuation of one of those seed-beds of war, the oppressions of small nations, is dooming his children's children to horrors of war still more appalling than those through which the world has just passed. The next war, as Mr Masterman has said, will not be a warning; it will be the end. The late war was a mere initial experiment in aerial warfare and in the use of deadly poisons. The next great war will be a universal murder of civilians, and attempts will be made to blot out great cities in a night. There will be no use in raising a cry of "Baby-killers." "Baby-killing" has now become a feature of war which no nation will forgo. Now, if there were any great moral end to be gained by bringing on such a war, with its attendant horrors, we might well set our jaws and look forward to it with what equanimity we could. But everyone knows that there is no moral end to be gained—at any rate, that there would not be if every nation agreed to the equal freedom of all other nations, and abandoned its passion for predominance. Wars are caused by imperial greed, not by the love of equality. In the world before the war, Germany, England, France, Italy and Austria were all consumed by a passion

for dominating other countries which they had no right to dominate. Their political ideals were ideals of power rather than of justice. Germany desired a place in the sun, failing to realise that each country is its own place in the sun. England already possessed many places in the sun, and even justified her possession of them on altruistic grounds. All the nations of Europe, indeed, that were able to do it, pursued a course of Imperialist rivalry, not of international justice. None was content to rule its own household. Each of them went out into the world, as unscrupulous as a robber baron. The greatness of a nation was judged by its capacity for stealing large portions of the earth's surface. The monomania of plunder that came to a head in the Europe of the nineteenth century will surely, when the world becomes civilised, be looked back on as the most disastrous form of madness that has ever afflicted human society. The passions of the European nations can only be compared to the passions of a primitive mining-camp, where the love of gold leads inevitably to envy, hatred and murder. Europe was a lawless society of law-abiding nations. Each of the nations had to some extent subdued the personal egoism of its citizens and kept it in check by a system of law and order. But there was no check of law and order on national egoism. There was no check except fear, and every nation prepared against the day when greed would become stronger than fear, and fighting would break out again. It was taken for granted that there would be fighting. What is there to do but fight when every country believes that it has a right to everything it can gain by fighting? We private citizens would fight and kill for wealth and power in the same way if we had not, for the sake of peace, devised a system of law to protect ourselves from each other's egoism. I do

not wish to imply that man would live entirely without moral considerations were it not for the law, or that nations live entirely without moral considerations in their present lawless state. All I contend is that, without a law expressing the spirit of justice, we should be unjust, quarrelsome, pugnacious and bloody to a degree to which we do not now dare to be. In so far as we have accepted the law, we have abandoned egoism to become social and civic beings. There is no reason for doubting that the nations also can become social and civic beings. If they cannot, Europe is destined to commit suicide in the next great war.

It is all the more appalling to find the statesmen of Europe still thinking in terms of empires instead of nations. The defeated empires have had to abandon their egoism—at least they have had to abandon the effective part of their egoism. But the egoism of the victorious empires, instead of diminishing, has grown. They have formed what is nominally a League of Nations, but what is really in great measure a League of Empires, by which each seems to be guaranteed in the possession of its most ill-gotten gains. Each of them claims the right to absolute rule within the territories it seized in previous wars. Not one of them outside America has performed a single act of self-renunciation, the example of which alone could begin the reign of justice among peoples. They have made Germany disgorge, but which of themselves has disgorged? And yet, until every empire voluntarily sets free its subject peoples, the first day of the new civilisation cannot arrive. England, unfortunately, has taken the lead in upholding the old system. Her statesmen vehemently declare that neither the League of Nations nor America shall be allowed to interfere in order to liberate Ireland—that Ireland is an internal

English question—Ireland, which is less English than Alsace-Lorraine is German! In private life, anyone suffering from internal trouble is usually only too glad of outside assistance to get rid of it. England, however, is almost proud of her internal trouble. She cries "Hands off!" angrily to those who would heal her. And the worst of it is, this disease of hers is infectious. It is the terrible disease of possessiveness. Every nation on the earth that desires to do wrong to another takes fresh heart when it thinks of the example of England in Ireland. Russians used it as an excuse for denying liberty to Poland. The Germans used it as an argument for their own Imperial crimes. Even King Leopold of Belgium, when he was accused of committing atrocities in the Congo, retorted with an allusion to Ireland. During the Peace Conference, the Italians used the presence of England in Ireland as an argument for the annexation of Dalmatia by themselves. Few Englishmen are aware, I fancy, of the force for evil that the English conquest of Ireland has been in international politics. England has given lessons of liberty to the world as splendid as any other nation in history. She has been one of the great democratic educators of mankind. In Ireland, on the other hand, she has given the world a lesson in the denial of liberty. Whether she will ultimately help to teach the world liberty or oppression it remains for the present generation of Englishmen more than any other to decide. The world will eagerly learn either lesson. It would not be too much to say that the world is likely to be more profoundly influenced for good or evil by England's treatment of Ireland than by any other empire's treatment of any other subject nation. England has by her natural genius become a leader among the nations. Will she lead the world into good or into evil?

The Allies, according to most of their spokesmen, went to war in order to establish certain principles of freedom and justice in international affairs. We were to have a new world in which the independence of the little nations was to be guarded as jealously as that of the greatest. The rescue of Belgium from the grip of Germany was to be but the first act in the great drama of the liberation of mankind. The British people acquiesced when Mr Asquith promised them such a war of liberation. The whole body of the Allies acquiesced when President Wilson asserted that the war had for one of its objects the securing to every nation of the right to choose its own rulers. The ordinary man began to wonder whether he was still on the earth, or whether he had got lost in heaven, as he read the noble sentiments of Allied statesmen and pamphleteers. Cynics reminded him that it was not the first time a war-wearied world had dreamed of establishing perpetual peace on a basis of international justice. He did not listen to the cynics, however. He told himself that dynasts and diplomats had settled the peace after previous wars. The democracies were going to take the matter in hand this time. Democracies would clearly be free from the old dynastic ambitions. They would insist on setting up a democracy of nations, in which every nation would have an equal right of self-government with the rest. They might not be able to establish a United States of the world, but they would at least establish a harmony of nations in which every nation would be equally sovereign within its own borders. Nations would, it was hoped, be willing to resign a certain portion of their sovereignty into the hands of the League of Nations, but the independence of one nation would not be limited to a greater extent than the sovereignty of another. Clearly, mankind could abolish war in a

year—at least, as far as the civilised world is concerned—if it were accepted that all nations had an equal right to liberty. Questions of the aspirations of border minorities might still arise, but these could be referred constitutionally at intervals to the League of Nations, which could guarantee the right of an oppressed minority to secede. The international parliament might thus do as much for the freedom and progress of mankind as a national parliament has done for the freedom and progress of England. It was evident, however, that if any of the great empires began to claim special privileges for continuing the old greeds and oppressions, all the other empires would claim the same privileges. The League of Nations could only be built on the universal will to renounce the right to oppress (or, if you prefer the word, to suppress) other nations. The League of Nations, as Mr H. G. Wells said, must supersede empire or it would be meaningless. The world could have peace, but only at a price. The question to be answered was whether any nation was willing to pay that price. Was Russia willing to take her hands off the throat of Poland? Was Prussia willing to give up Alsace? Was Italy willing to renounce her ambitions on the east coast of the Adriatic? Was England willing to set Ireland free? Alas, it was discovered at the Peace Conference that every one of the victorious nations, except America, so far from being in a mood for renunciation, was more determined than could have been foreseen to keep its grip on every square inch of territory into which it could fix its talons. Every democracy was betrayed by its leaders as completely as it had ever been betrayed by its dynasts. If a roomful of criminals had gathered together deliberately to concoct a plan for another world war within the next century, they could hardly have acted

differently from the stupid and short-sighted statesmen who had the destiny of the world in their keeping at Versailles. This is not a rhetorical exaggeration. It is a lamentably simple fact. The new world-order was not begun, because no statesman had the courage to call on his nation to live in the spirit of the new world-order. England could not in decency ask France and Italy to curb their greed, as she herself was not willing to renounce a single acre of her vast Empire. Fortunately, however, the League of Nations has at least been born. If it grows to maturity, the world may yet be saved. But it is a sickly, anæmic child, and it can only be nursed into manhood if its parents close their selfish, orgiestic brawls over its cradle and take to behaving with common sense, common decency and common kindness. We shall surely be behaving like the most heartless blackguards if we neglect anything that can save the life of the great hope of mankind. Probably, however, the miseries of the world are due at least as much to want of imagination as to blackguardism. That is why statesmen should be afraid above all of behaving unimaginatively. Yet what could be more unimaginative than to fail to realise that the life of a subject nation is a life of spiritual torture—that the passion for freedom is not a passion for evil but is one of the noblest passions which have ever found a home in the hearts of men? To outrage this passion is to introduce a poison into the life of the world. It is the attempted murder of a soul. Crimes of a certain kind were followed in the Greek tragedy by the coming of the Furies. The crime of destroying a nation's freedom to live its own life will always as surely be followed by the coming of the Furies of war upon the great empires. The last war was not merely the punishment of the guilt of Germany, but was the punishment of the guilt of imperialism. While

you have imperialism, you will have wars. The only way to end war is to end imperialism.

If this is so, it can hardly be disputed that the greatest contribution England could make to the establishment of a new world-order would be the immediate surrender of Ireland into the hands of the Irish people, to rule it either as a republic or a dominion, according as the people themselves decide. Some nation has to begin some time, and England may well claim the privilege of being the world's first liberator. There is no moral argument in favour of granting Ireland Dominion Home Rule which does not tell with equal strength in favour of an Irish Republic, should the Irish people prefer that form of government. England is in Ireland not as a matter of right but as a matter of power. She has no more "right" in Ireland than she has in France. France is strategically more important to her, and is nearer her shores; France has also a Protestant minority, which was treated more harshly on various occasions than the Protestant minority was ever treated in Ireland. England has exactly the same right in Ireland that Turkey had in Serbia—the right of long centuries of conquest. She has even less right than Germany had in Belgium; for if the philosophy of imperialism and strategic frontiers is a true philosophy, Germany's criminal attack on Belgium was not only intelligble but justified. From a nationalist point of view, Germany's invasion of Belgium was a crime. From an imperialist point of view, there was no moral objection to it.

Briefly then, my argument is that England can save herself and save the world only by saving Ireland. She has to choose between teaching the world freedom and teaching the world imperialism. And now that the people of Asia are waking, woe be to her if she teaches the world imperialism. Asia

is learning many things from Europe. If we teach her imperialism, the "yellow peril" will become more than a sensation-monger's nightmare. Imperialism, I know, is in some form or other a universal vice of human nature. It remained for Europe, however, to idealise it as a part of the higher morality. We cannot continue to do so without debasing the moral currency of the world. We may even be preparing the overthrow of Europe and its civilisation by persisting in governing some tiny minority of people against its will. "A bacterium that may kill you or me," says Mr Wells, "in some novel and disgusting way may even now be developing in some Congo muck-heap." The bacterium of world war may similarly be developing in some negligible little nation for which nobody but its own children cares a button. It is all-important that the body of Europe should be cleansed of such bacteria. But we can only do this by facing the facts, and by making the European nations a brotherhood of free peoples. The destruction of the bacteria of war is as simple a matter as the destruction of the bacteria of sleeping sickness. Statesmanship would not need to be moral, it would only need to be scientific, to accomplish this. The scientific statesman would sweep away the causes of the disease of war by strengthening the forces that make for the health of nations. And the greatest of these is freedom (which includes the love of freedom). A wise Englishman would not only not hesitate to grant freedom to Ireland; he would thrust freedom upon her with both hands for the sake of the future of his own country and of mankind.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL THREAD: HOW IRELAND HELPED TO CIVILISE EUROPE

IT is more than ever worthwhile at the present moment to try to understand the background of history against which the Irish people see themselves as the members of a distinct nation. One need not go back to the prehistoric days before the coming of the Gaels, nor need one consider whether the Gaels were really the descendants of Gadelius, who married Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh, and, as a result of taking the side of the oppressed Hebrews, was compelled to fly from Egypt. It is hardly necessary even to consider whether the Gaels were Celts or, as many recent students believe, members of the same Nordic or Teutonic race from which the English come. According to the annalists, they arrived in Ireland as conquerors in the year 1700 B.C. The date is of little account. What is most important to emphasise is that, during many centuries of Gaelic rule, Ireland was a nation with one code of laws, one language, and one High-King (who, however, at several periods shared the throne with a joint ruler).

Even before her conversion to Christianity in the fifth century Ireland seems to have had frequent intercourse with Europe as well as with Great Britain. King Niall of the Nine Hostages was slain on the coast of the English Channel while invading Britain in A.D. 405, and, twenty-three years later, his nephew, King Dathi, was killed by lightning in

Gaul, near the Alps, having (according to the theory of Professor Bury) gone thither at the head of his troops to aid the Romans against the Franks. And there is evidence that in those days Ireland traded freely with other countries as well as made war on them. It was not, however, till St Patrick (who in his boyhood had been brought as a slave to Ireland) came back to the country in 432 as a missionary and Christianised it that Ireland became one of the conspicuous nations of Europe. Irish intercourse with Europe seems in early times to have been direct rather than by way of England. During the sixth and succeeding centuries there was scarcely a corner of the known world to which Irishmen did not penetrate, taking with them religion and learning and the arts. Ireland became a land of schools, lay and monastic. Her schools and scholars were celebrated throughout Europe. She has been described as "the most learned country in Europe" at this period. Foreigners flocked to her as to a university. We hear of Germans, Gauls, Romans, Britons and even Egyptians coming to her for their "higher education." English princes were educated at her schools, and Dagobert II., King of the Franks, went as a student to Ireland. At the same time, Irishmen founded monasteries and schools in every part of Europe and even in Carthage. One Irishman, St Gall, a famous hermit and church-founder of the seventh century, has had one of the cantons of Switzerland called after him. Another Irishman, Virgilius—O'Farrell Latinised—became Bishop of Salzburg in the eighth century, and made a reputation by teaching that the world was round and that people lived at the Antipodes. It was to an Irish scholar, Dungal, as the greatest astronomer of the time, that Charlemagne appealed to explain the alleged occurrence of two solar eclipses in the year

810. And the list of the Irish "makers of Europe" in those centuries includes many other famous names, perhaps the most famous of all being that of Johannes Scotus Erigena, the most remarkable scholar and philosopher of the ninth century, who taught at the Court of Charles the Bald. The Irish schools seem to have kept alive Greek learning when it had perished throughout the west of Europe. It has been said that at the time of Charles the Bald it was scarcely possible to find anyone who spoke Greek on the Continent except an Irishman or one who had been taught by an Irishman. The memorable Irish conquests were the conquests of religion and learning, not of warfare. They are associated with the names, not of battle sites but of the monastic foundations of Luxeuil, St Gall and Bobbio, of Iona, Lindisfarne and Malmesbury.

Many historians write as though the significant fact in early Irish history were not the great mission to Britain and the Continent—a mission which incidentally helped to mould the civilisation of England and France, to name no other countries—but the recurring unrest of the provincial kings and the failure of the High-Kings to form a strong central government. It is absurd, however, to be horror-stricken upon finding in Ireland what is taken for granted in the history of France, England and Italy. Ireland, like other countries, suffered much from disorder, but she was orderly enough to build up a remarkable and distinctive civilisation, which pervaded the whole country from north to south, and which has left its traces to the present day in a fine imaginative literature, and in beautiful artistic workmanship in illuminated manuscripts, in gold and in enamel. That it must in some respects have been a luxurious civilisation is suggested by the constant references to gold ornaments in the old literature and

indeed by the fact that, while the weight of the gold ornaments in the British Museum collected from Great Britain is about 50 ounces, the weight of a similar Irish collection in the National Museum in Dublin is about 570 ounces. It is now impossible to say along what lines this most promising Irish civilisation would have developed if it had not been interfered with by invaders, first from Scandinavia and then from England of the Normans. But the Book of Kells, the Ardagh Chalice, the Cross of Cong, the Tara Brooch, and the prose romances of Finn and Cuchullain suggest the beginnings of a richly imaginative national life—a national life which, for some reason or other, has not been able to express itself fully and satisfactorily for the better part of a thousand years.

For good or for ill, Ireland had not shared the fate of Britain in being subjected, first, to the Roman Empire, and afterwards to the invading Angles and Saxons. Tacitus tells us that Agricola contemplated the subjugation of Ireland because he thought it would finally crush the spirit of the Britons to see "every spark of liberty extinguished round their coast." But Ireland remained free from foreign rule for seven centuries longer. And Norsemen and Danes, though they established themselves in many parts of Ireland between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the eleventh centuries, never conquered the country as a whole to the point of putting a Danish High-King on the throne. Their record in Ireland, though they were apparently the first town-builders, is one of destruction and cruelty. They plundered and ravished Armagh a score of times, and almost every famous religious centre in Ireland—Glendalough, Clonard and Clonmacnoise—was at one time or another sacked by them, the people slaughtered or enslaved, the gold ornaments

stolen, and the books (precious as a king's ransom) burned or "drowned." It is an astonishing thing that, in spite of two centuries of gluttonous plunder, so much of the old art and literature and learning of the country survived. Even during the greatest agonies of the Danish invasions, Irish saints and scholars continued to labour in the schools and to send forth learned missionaries able to Christianise anybody in Europe, except the enemies of Ireland. It was Brian Boru who finally released Ireland from the Danish horror by his great victory over the foreigners at Clontarf on the 23rd of April 1014. As a youth, he had found the submission of Irishmen to the Danes intolerable, and when his elder brother, the King of Munster, entered into a truce with them, Brian refused to recognise it, "for," he said, "however small the injury he might be able to do the foreigners, he preferred it to peace"—a sentence prophetic of the attitude of many Irishmen in later ages. An ambitious as well as a patriotic man, he aimed at and achieved the supreme power in Ireland, and he gave the country a long spell of peace, during which he repaired a multitude of churches and monasteries and made roads and bridges, and sent learned men over the sea to purchase books to take the place of those which had been destroyed by the Danes. This was one of the golden periods of Irish history. It was a national disaster that there was no one with the same genius for government to succeed Brian when, at the age of seventy-three, he was slain in the hour of victory at the battle of Clontarf.

After the defeat of the Danes, who had swept down upon Ireland from all quarters in a last desperate challenge, came a century and a half of national revival. It was during this time that many of the famous churches of Ireland, such as those of Cashel and Cong, were built. Historians wrote of

the Danish wars. Men of letters wrote down the heroic tales in the form in which we now possess them. Scholars made translations from Latin into Irish. The school of Armagh was exalted into something like a national university, at which every lector in an Irish church was compelled to graduate. This was what is called a "time of transition." Ireland was faced by serious problems of government. She had to discover a more stable order than was compatible with a system of ambitious provincial kings and a more or less elective monarchy. She suffered, like eighteenth-century Poland, from too much individualism, though even in the eleventh century she had strong High-Kings like Turlough O'Brien, whom Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, addressed as "magnificent King of Hibernia," adding that the Almighty had shown great kindness to Ireland "when He gave your Excellency supreme power over that land." The weakness of the Irish monarchical system, however, together with much civil strife and certain troubles in the Church, gave Henry II. an opportunity of effecting a conquest such as the Romans had not essayed and the Danes had not succeeded in. Accordingly, in 1154, he obtained a Bull from Pope Adrian IV.—who, incidentally, was an Englishman—giving him permission to go on a sort of crusade into Ireland and "subject the people to laws." It is one of the ironies of history that, though the Orangeman's motto is "To Hell with the Pope," it is the Pope who, in the Middle Ages, as in the more recent days of the land war, has again and again been one of the chief bulwarks of British rule in Ireland. As Father M. H. MacInerney says in a remarkable book, *A History of the Irish Dominicans*:

"From the time of Adrian IV. onward it became the traditional policy of the Popes to foster the

power of England for political reasons of their own. They wanted the support of England in their contests with the German emperors, in their difficulties with French kings, in the affair of Sicily, and particularly in the Crusades. The Popes apparently desired to see the British Isles consolidated into a single kingdom, under the strong rule of the English King. Hence their traditional partiality for the English monarch, and their unfriendliness to Irish and Scottish independence."

The Normans were too busily occupied in various wars, however, to take immediate advantage of Adrian's Bull, and when they ultimately did begin to cross to Ireland in the invasions of 1168, 1169 and 1171, it was not upon a crusade but in answer to an appeal for help from Dermot MacMurrogh, a dispossessed King of Leinster. Had Henry II. permitted Strongbow to conquer Ireland at this time, and to become the first Norman King of Ireland, then Ireland might have gained as much as England from Norman law and order. But he was too jealous to allow this, and the Irish, instead of becoming the subjects of a residential Norman King (whom they might ultimately have nationalised), were treated as the enemies of an absentee Norman King (whom, in the circumstances, it was impossible to nationalise). There, in a sentence, you have the difference between the Norman conquest of England and the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland. Norman government in England became a national institution. Anglo-Norman government in Ireland never for a moment ceased to be an anti-national institution. That is one of the keys to the understanding of Irish history.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORICAL THREAD: A NATION UNDER ONE KING

"WHAT! Was there ever any general King of all Ireland? I never heard it before," exclaims one of the speakers in Edmund Spenser's famous dialogue about the state of Ireland in the time of Elizabeth. It was the work of Henry II. and his successors to smash beyond repair so much of national unity as was symbolised by the High-Kingship, and to foment disunion among the Irish princes. English policy in Ireland during this period was admirably summed up by a Bishop of Waterford who, on being asked by King Edward I. why certain contentions between Irish chieftains were not suppressed, replied that "in policy he thought it expedient to wink at one knave cutting off another, and that would save the King's coffers and purchase peace to the land; whereat the King smiled and bid him return to Ireland." It would probably have done Ireland little harm to be invaded and conquered. It did her infinite harm to have a conqueror who, so far from ultimately identifying himself with the inhabitants of the country, maintained his position by setting them at each other's throats. And it was not only the original Irish who were a prey to these divisions. The English invaders were equally turbulent after the mediæval fashion. They fought among each other like cats or Greek cities. Nor were they allowed to settle down on terms of friendship with the Irish.

Immediately they showed signs of doing so, a law was passed thundering penalties against conduct so "degenerate." Thus English rule came to Ireland not as an aid, but as a hindrance to the development of a modern civilisation. Lecky put the case in a few words:

"Like a spear-point embedded in a living body, it inflamed all around it and deranged every vital function. It prevented the gradual reduction of the island by some native Clovis, which would necessarily have taken place if the Anglo-Normans had not arrived, and, instead of that peaceful and almost silent amalgamation of races, customs, laws, and languages which took place in England, and which is the source of many of the best elements in English life and character, the two nations remained in Ireland for centuries in hostility."

This does not mean, however, that the Irish were not able again and again to rally in an attempt to recover their lands and liberties. They called in Edward Bruce, the brother of Robert Bruce, and crowned him King Edward I. of Ireland in 1316, in spite of the Pope's threat to excommunicate all who sided with him. Under Bruce, they defeated the Anglo-Normans in more than one battle in the following two years, at the end of which, owing to his folly and impatience, he was overwhelmed, and his head cut off and salted and sent to the English King.

In the Middle Ages and up till the time of Elizabeth, Cromwell and William III., Irishmen made many attempts to reassert their liberties. One pictures Ireland as a nation continually struggling to her feet and continually bludgeoned into impotence again. England issued edict after

edict against her laws, her customs, her language, her education and her trade, but in all these matters Ireland almost held her own until the coming of the Tudors. Richard II., when he was a candidate for the Holy Roman Empire, was jeered at because he could not even subdue Ireland at his doors. He made two attempts to do so, and, while he was absent in Ireland, he lost the English throne. English law, soon after, was powerless thirty miles outside Dublin. Irish traders were meanwhile sending their wares to all the ports of Europe, and Irish scholars seeking learning at all the universities. English colonists were forbidden to trade with Irishmen, but the prohibition was a dead letter. Irishmen desiring education were forbidden by a law of Henry IV.'s time to go to "the schools of Oxford, Cambridge, or elsewhere," but this law, too, failed in its object. The Irish instinct for—in a modern phrase—complete national self-expression was too powerful to be restrained by edicts. Perhaps the most remarkable triumph of the national spirit during the mediæval period was the Irishising of the English settlers. De Burgho began to call himself MacWilliam, Bermingham to call himself MacFerris, De Exeter MacJordan, Nangle MacCostelloe, and so on, exchanging Norman for Irish names. It was a symbolic act in the fourteenth century when the leaders of the Burkes took off their Norman dress and arms in sight of the King's army at Athlone and dressed themselves instead in the saffron robes of Irish chieftains. The English settlers, indeed, were as ready as the Irish themselves on occasion to assert their independence of England. They insisted time and again that their Parliament was independent of the English Parliament. In 1408, for instance, they resolved "that the statutes made in England should not be of force in this Kingdom,

unless they were allowed and published in this Kingdom by Parliament." Thus we see two races growing up in Ireland with converging ideals. Fusion between the races was, but for outside interference, inevitable. England alienated her own colonists in Ireland by treating them with the same suspicion and harshness with which she treated the Irish. This was especially so after the English in Ireland, siding with the White Rose against the Red, accepted first Lambert Simnel and then Perkin Warbeck as their king. Henry VII., in disgust, sent over Sir Edward Poynings in 1494 to wreck the independence of the Anglo-Irish Parliament. The passing of "Poynings' Law," which forbade the Irish Parliament to originate laws without the consent of the English King and Privy Council, is a hated event in Irish constitutional history. In spite of this blow to Anglo-Ireland, however—partly, perhaps, as a distant result of it—the next great Irish rebel was a member of the English colony. The rebellion of Silken Thomas in 1534 was a FitzGerald rebellion. Seven years later, Henry VIII., feeling the need of strengthening his authority, called the Irish Parliament together to sanction his adoption of the title "King of Ireland" in place of the title "Lord of Ireland," hitherto assumed by English monarchs. The Bill authorising this was read to the Parliament both in English and in Irish—evidence of the extent to which the Irish had reconquered Ireland since the time of Henry II. It was the first time, indeed, the native Irish had been invited to attend the Parliament. This use of the Irish language, unfortunately, was almost the last courtesy the Tudors paid to the conquered nation.

It was not, as some people seem to think, a passion for Protestantism that dictated the Tudor policy in Ireland. The Tudors were more eager to destroy

the language and liberties than to save the souls of the Irish. Queen Mary (from whose persecutions English Protestants fled to Catholic Ireland for safety) was as hostile to everything Irish as her father had been. It was in her reign that a law was passed which flooded Ireland with debased money which was forbidden to be circulated in England—an obviously destructive blow to Irish trade. She also carried on her father's policy of denying the traditional right of the Irish people to share in the ownership of their lands, or to elect their chiefs, who were turned (with considerable flattery) into hereditary English barons. Every Irish custom, whether of dress or speech, was soon proscribed, and in Elizabeth's reign it became an offence to good men for an Irishman to be alive. I will not quote Nationalist historians in regard to the orgy of massacre and plunder and destruction which Elizabeth and her Ministers let loose on Ireland. English and pro-English historians are sufficiently emphatic as to the agonies that then laid waste the country in a manner that can scarcely be paralleled outside Armenia. Lecky declares that "the suppression of the native race . . . was carried on with a ferocity which surpassed that of Alva in the Netherlands, and has seldom been exceeded in the page of history." "Sir Peter Carew," writes Froude, "has been seen murdering women and children, and babies that had scarcely left the breast." Sir Humfrey Gilbert, another leading Englishman of the time, was, Froude goes on to say, not a bad man, but, in making war on the Irish, he "regarded himself as dealing rather with savage beasts than with human beings, and when he tracked them to their dens he strangled their cubs and rooted out the entire broods." And these instances are typical. Every torture of burning, strangling, and starvation

was resorted to. When Irish chiefs eluded capture, assassins were hired to poison or otherwise "abridge" them, as in the case of Shane O'Neill, Hugh O'Neill, Red Hugh O'Donnell and Fiach MacHugh O'Byrne. Shane O'Neill was murdered by arrangement at a banquet in 1567, after having made war on the English intermittently for sixteen years. Hugh O'Neill, though taken to be educated in England, was the next great Irish leader. He defeated the English in 1598 at the battle of the Yellow Ford, called in the Spaniards (with whom the Irish ports of the west had traded for centuries) and marched victoriously from north to south of the country, but the national cause went down in disaster at the battle of Kinsale in 1602. With the Flight of the Earls in 1607 a nation also seemed to take to flight, and the planting of Ulster, followed by the planting of Leinster, with Lowland Scots and Englishmen, looked like the last word in the abolition of an ancient race. Nothing could be more characteristic of the vitality of the Irish genius than the fact that amid the fire and slaughter of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the poets and historians went on with their labour of keeping alive the tradition and spirit of the nation. O'Higgin, O'Hussey, Ward and O'Gnive are among the poets of the time, some of whose passionate work still survives, and it was in these dark days that Keating wrote his *History of Ireland* and the O'Clerys *The Annals of the Four Masters.* It was some time earlier, I fancy, that *Marco Polo* and Mandeville's *Travels* had been translated, like many other foreign works, into Irish. Seldom can there have been a nation which clung more tenaciously to its civilisation and culture.

Exiles in their own land, the dispossessed Irish rose again in 1641 under Owen Roe O'Neill, a great

and humane man who had earned fame in the Spanish service. With fine national insight he attempted to win over the Scots planters of Ulster as well as the Anglo-Irish to his banner, but in this he failed. He won a tremendous victory in the battle of Benburb in 1646, sending his men into the charge with the exhortation: "In the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, charge for the old land." He was a model of chivalry and statesmanship as well as a great military leader. He died of illness, unfortunately for Ireland, in 1649, before he had had time to meet Cromwell in the field. "God help him," cried his nephew, who watched over him during his illness; "he talks of freeing Ireland first, and afterwards expelling the Turk from Europe." Cromwell, who landed in Ireland in the year of O'Neill's death, fought more honourably than the Elizabethan ravagers, but he too dreamed of uprooting the Irish nation for ever and ever, or at least of sweeping all that was left of it "to Hell or Connaught." He waged war with a German ruthlessness. His savage slaughterings at Wexford and Drogheda have made his memory a thing of horror in Irish history, and the Irish still recall with passionate anger the way in which, under his rule, thousands of Irish women, children and boys were sold into slavery in the West Indies. It was estimated by Sir William Petty that during the O'Neill-Cromwellian War of 1641-1652 a third of the population of Ireland perished by sword, plague and famine.

The Irish nation, however, did not perish. It owed little to Charles II., who in spite of Stuart promises left two-thirds of the good land of Ireland in the hands of Protestants and recent English settlers; and it owed less to James II., who used it merely as a weapon to win back the English throne. It had sufficiently recovered its strength,

however, to play a leading part in the Jacobite war which began when the thirteen apprentices closed the gates of Derry in 1688, and, continuing after the defeat of the Boyne two years later, came to an end in 1691. At this date Sarsfield surrendered Limerick to the Williamites, not unconditionally, but on terms. The Treaty of Limerick guaranteed religious freedom to the Irish, and it is understood that this was in accordance with King William's own wishes. The extreme Protestants insisted, however, by an act of perfidy which in Ireland is still contemporary history, that the Treaty should be torn up and the Irish subjected to both religious and commercial persecution. Even to-day Limerick is known to every Irish school-child as the City of the Broken Treaty. During the era of the Penal Laws that followed Irish soldiers fought against the English in most of the great armies of Europe, rushing into action with the battle-cry: "Remember Limerick!" Sarsfield himself died fighting for the French against the English at Landen in 1693. He is said to have cried with his last breath: "O that this had been for Ireland!" It must have seemed to him and to the other exiles of those sunless days that Ireland had now gone down into the grave for ever.

CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORICAL THREAD: THE NEW IRISH NATION

In order to understand the state of Ireland in the early part of the eighteenth century, one must try to imagine what England would be like if all her national institutions and interests were swamped in a general ruin—the throne, the landed aristocracy, the soldiers, the laws and lawyers, the churchmen, the middle-class manufacturers, the shipowners, the skilled artisans and the schoolmasters. One may, I admit, deny the exactness of the parallel, but one cannot deny the truth of the picture. It is a picture of the utter destruction of national life—both of the real and the potential national life—so that, as far as was possible, not one stone was left standing on another. What Burke called "the outlawry of the mass of the people" was the first principle of English government in Ireland. Irishmen continued to exist, it is true, as the Christian populations in the Balkans continued to exist for centuries under the rule of the Turkish ascendancy. But they were not encouraged to do so. Everything was done that could be done to impoverish and debase them and to stamp them as an eternally inferior people. The Penal Laws, no doubt, threw open to Irishmen the profession of the turncoat, but, as Lord Chancellor Bowes and Chief Justice Robinson laid down from the bench, the law did not "suppose any such person to exist as an Irish Roman Catholic." It has often been said in

recent years that in practice the Penal Laws were not so severe as people imagine. This kind of apology reminds one of Miss Hobhouse's suggestion that the German devastation of Belgium has been greatly exaggerated. The spirit in which Ireland was ruled at the beginning of the eighteenth century by the occupying Ascendancy may be gathered from the fact that the Irish Privy Council in 1719 actually proposed that any unregistered priest or friar found in Ireland should be castrated.

It is probable, however, that the national life of Ireland did not suffer such lasting injurious effects from the Penal Laws as from the destruction of Irish manufactures by the English Parliament. In spite of laws and "priest-hunters"—secular priests were allowed to remain on certain conditions, by the way —Irishmen continued to study for the priesthood at Paris and Salamanca and Louvain, and to return to serve Mass to their people in caves and woods. The Bishop of Kilmore, who was a skilled player on the bagpipes, went round his diocese in the disguise of a Highland piper. Thus the religious tradition of the country was never destroyed. The manufacturing tradition, on the other hand, was destroyed to such a degree that, when the industrial revolution arrived, Ireland was as impotent to meet the new conditions as a man whose hands have been tied behind his back is to build a house. England had already taken steps to suppress the Irish woollen trade at the time of Strafford. Later on, she prohibited the export of woollen manufactures from Ireland to the colonies, and shut them out of her own markets by preventive duties. In 1699 the Parliament at Westminster went still further and passed a law forbidding the export of manufactured wool from Ireland to any other country whatever. The Irish trade with England in live stock and provisions had been destroyed by

the Cattle Acts of Charles II. Ireland thereupon built up a thriving provision trade with the Continent and the colonies. England, jealous of this direct intercourse between Ireland and the plantations, then forbade the Irish to import from the colonies any goods that had not been first landed in England, with the result that a heavy blow was struck at Irish shipping as well as at the colonial trade. These things are typical of the way in which the Irish trade and manufactures were strangled almost at birth by the English Parliament. An Irish glass industry sprang up: the export of glass from Ireland to any country whatever was forbidden. Irish silk manufactures and Irish gloves, again, were excluded from the English market. By one means or another every industry or prospective industry — even to some extent the linen of the north—was either hampered or destroyed. Brewing, cotton, fish-curing, sugar-refining—it was possible to build up none of these industries on a secure basis on account of the jealousy of the English manufacturing classes. The silent harbours of the west of Ireland in the twentieth century are surviving witnesses to the destruction of the nascent industrial spirit of the country two hundred years ago.

This widespread ruin of industry and commerce had disastrous effects both on the Catholic and the Protestant population. It gave the Irish Catholics no outlet save the land—of which they had been largely dispossessed. When, thrust out of the industries, they made an attempt to recover their ancestral fields, they were punished as marauders and agrarian criminals. Irish Protestants, disgusted at once with the restrictions on their industries and with the rack-renting methods of the landlords, began to stream out of the country in thousands, and it is a memorable commentary on anti-Irish statesmanship

that Irish Protestants played as great a part in the challenge to English power at Bunker's Hill as Irish Catholics did in the similar challenge at Fontenoy.

General Robertson, giving evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons at the end of the American War, quoted an American general to the effect that "half the rebel Continental Army were from Ireland." Lord Mountjoy, still a Commoner at the time, declared in 1784 that "America was lost by Irish emigrants," and added that he had authority for the astonishing statement that "the Irish language was as commonly spoken in the American ranks as English." The eighteenth century, however, is notable in Irish history less for what the Irish did in the field abroad than for what they achieved in national reconstruction at home. It is remarkable enough that in all these years of ruin the line of poets and musicians — Carolan and Owen Roe O'Sullivan are among the well-known names—never was allowed to perish. It is remarkable, too, that in spite of persecutors and proselytisers Irish schools—"Popish schools," as they were called—sprang up in hundreds in the remotest parts of the country and even in the heart of the Anglicised towns. It was to Munster especially that "poor scholars" came from all parts in search of Greek and Latin learning: "Munster for learning," an Irish proverb says till the present day. But the spirit of nationality—a spirit inevitably seeking to embody itself in institutions—did not merely haunt forbidden schools and keep alive the geuius of the poet and harp-player. It took possession of the Parliament of the settlers itself. The old Irish nation having been swept out of the field as an organised force, a new Irish nation marched forward to take its place.

The author of Irish Protestant Nationalism was William Molyneux, who denied that the Irish Parlia-

ment was historically or rightly dependent on the Parliament of England, and who wrote the primer of Irish constitutional liberty (which was, naturally, ordered to be burned by the hangman). Swift followed, and his denunciations of alien government have the ring of contemporary political utterances. "We are in the condition," he declared, "of patients who have physic sent to them by doctors at a distance, strangers to their constitution, and the nature of their disease." He put the facts as regards English government in Ireland in an immortal and sardonic sentence. "In reason," he said, "all government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery; but, in fact, eleven men, well armed, will certainly subdue one single man in his shirt." Gradually, the Irish Parliament, anti-Catholic though it was, stuffed with placemen and pensioners, and without any Septennial Act to keep it under the control of public opinion, began to respond to the new spirit in the country, and to protest against the impoverishment of Ireland, which was due not only to commercial restrictions but to absentee landlordism, and to the outrageous pension system whereby any discarded royal mistress or scamp in need of a salary was charged to the Irish funds. Irish opinion, which armed the Protestant Volunteers for the defence of Ireland against a threatened French invasion during the American War, quickly realised the use that might be made of the new force for national purposes. At a grand parade of the Volunteers in Dublin in 1779, the object of which was to demand freedom of trade, Napper Tandy's cannon rattled through the main streets of the city bearing the quaint inscription: "Open thou our mouths, O Lord, and our lips shall show forth Thy praise." The Commercial Code was repealed in the following year. Backed by the Volunteers and by the great mass both of Protestant

and Catholic opinion, Grattan at once pressed for the recognition of the Irish demand for legislative independence. In making this demand, Irish statesmen based their claim on the ancient constitution of the country since the time of the Normans, treating Poynings' Law (as usually understood) and the Sixth of George I. merely as unconstitutional outrages on Irish liberty. They declared that the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland were the only power competent to enact laws to bind Ireland. They were loyal to King George not as the King of England but as the King of Ireland. The English Ministry yielded to the Irish demand for independence in 1782 and, in the following year, to make assurance doubly sure, they passed a Renunciation Act through the Parliament at Westminster, declaring that the

"Right claimed by the people of Ireland, to be bound only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the Parliament of that kingdom [Ireland] in all cases whatever, . . . is hereby declared to be established, and ascertained for ever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable."

This pledge was cheerfully torn up in the same generation in which it was so solemnly given.

Much has been written both in praise and dispraise of Grattan's Parliament, as the Irish Parliament between 1782 and 1800 is usually called. Its chief vice was that it had not a Cabinet responsible to it. The Irish Ministers, appointed by the King, were really the agents of the English Cabinet. The Irish Parliament might register vote after vote against them: they remained in office none the less as the servants of King George. The Irish House of Commons consisted at this time of three hundred Members, of whom, Grattan estimated, two-thirds were returned

by fewer than two hundred persons. Here was a rich field of corruption, and Ministers made the most of it. Grattan's Parliament in Ireland was as corrupt, let us say, as Walpole's Parliament in England. In spite of this, however, it was shaped into a marvellously workable instrument for the expression of the national will in progressive measures. The Irish Parliament had hitherto been forbidden to pass a law making the judges independent of the executive. Grattan's Parliament was no sooner in existence than it secured the same independence for Irish judges as English judges had possessed for sixty-eight years. In the same year it restored the right of Catholics to acquire every kind of freehold property. In 1792 and 1793 it granted the Parliamentary franchise to Catholics, opened (to some extent) the learned professions and army appointments to them, and enabled them to serve as magistrates and on grand juries. Thus the essentials of Catholic Emancipation (which did not come in England till 1829) were carried through Grattan's Parliament in 1793. "But for the Union," O'Connell truly declared in 1833, "we should have been emancipated by our Protestant fellow-countrymen long before." During the brief life of Grattan's Parliament, Ireland did not suddenly blossom into a paradise, but she made strides towards prosperity in manufactures and agriculture to which even anti-Irish statesmen bore abundant witness at the time. Castlereagh's Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle even declared that one of the causes of the "dangerous state" of Ireland at the end of the century was "the general prosperity of the country, which has produced great activity and energy!"

One thing, unfortunately, the Irish Parliament steadily refused to do. The pensioners and the representatives of rotten boroughs were unwilling to sacrifice their bread and butter by reforming

their House. It is only fair to remember that the English Parliament itself would not at that time have dreamed of passing so radical a measure of reform as that proposed to Grattan's Parliament in 1783 by the leaders of the Volunteers. All the same, in refusing to reform itself, Grattan's Parliament committed a fatal blunder. Had the Volunteers' Reform Bill been allowed to pass in 1783 it is likely enough that the Union with England would never have taken place. For one thing, the insurrection of 1798—which, many reputable people have held, was deliberately "facilitated" by the Government in order to create an excuse for the Union—would not have happened. Reform having failed, revolution took its place.

It is interesting to recall that it was Presbyterian Ulster which turned with especial eagerness to the idea of compelling the Irish Parliament to reform itself by a revolution which would at once destroy the tyranny of the unreformed Parliament and would separate Ireland from the inevitably corrupting influence of English Ministers. The French Revolution filled Ulster with high hopes and ardent ideals. Paine's *Rights of Man* became (in Wolfe Tone's phrase) the Koran of Belfast, and the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille was enthusiastically celebrated by the whole population of the town. No attempt was made by the authorities to meet public opinion, and events moved with tragic certainty to the rising of the United Irishmen. The rising, which was a failure, was stamped out with a ferocity which, though it provoked ferocious reprisals, has never been forgotten by the common people. "Every crime, every cruelty, that could be committed by Cossacks or Calmucks has been transacted here," General Abercromby, the Commander-in-Chief, said of the forces under him, which had been goading the

people beyond endurance in the months preceding the rebellion. During the suppression of the rebellion, no quarter was given by the military, and, as Lecky says, "the executions . . . were far less horrible than the indiscriminate burning of houses and slaughter of unarmed men, and even of women, by the troops." It was an inauspicious prelude to the Union.

The history of Ireland in the eighteenth century, as the Nationalist reads it, is a tragedy of jealousy —English jealousy of the commercial prosperity and political liberty of a neighbouring nation. Pitt looked at Ireland purely from the point of view of supposed English interests. He now determined to tear up the Renunciation Act and push through an old project for destroying the Irish Parliament altogether, in spite of the fact that it was the Irish Parliament which had supplied the bulk of the money and the troops for the suppression of the rebellion. Even though the country was in a state of confusion and horror and despair, however, the Ministers did not dare to put the question of the Union to the test of a General Election. Not Ireland but a bribed Parliament was to be asked to decide Ireland's fate. Corrupt as the Irish House of Commons was, even it passed a Unionist resolution in 1799 by a majority of only one. Dublin was illuminated, thinking that this meant a moral defeat for the proposal. Castlereagh and Clare, however, set to work with more than a million of money and bought the patrons of many pocket boroughs with a promise of £7500 each for eighty-four seats which were to be disfranchised after the Union. What Lecky called "the unbribed intellect of Ireland" fought against the Union to the last: it is said that there were only seven members who in 1800 voted for the Union from disinterested motives and without a bribe. Never surely was a national

Parliament given so brief and so poor a chance to justify its existence. No man had a right to pronounce it a failure in the year 1800. Its promise was of the noblest. No wonder that Grattan, in his last great speech against the Union, refused to believe that the nation he had done so much to build up was dead beyond awakening, and that he quoted over it the passionate words addressed by Romeo to Juliet in the vault:

> Thou art not conquer'd: Beauty's ensign yet
> Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
> And death's pale flag is not advancèd there.

Archbishop Troy and the rest of the Catholic Bishops supported the Union in return for an understanding that the Catholics would at once be emancipated. Pitt, having achieved his object, did not redeem his promise; he was afraid that if he did King George III. might go mad. That is why ever since to the Irish Nationalist the Union has seemed not merely an evil, but an evil begotten by corruption upon faithlessness.

CHAPTER V

THE HISTORICAL THREAD: THE WORST CENTURY OF ALL

BYRON'S comment on the Union between England and Ireland is famous. It was, he said, "the union of the shark with its prey." Dr Johnson's prophecy has been quoted almost as often. "Do not unite with us," he said to an Irishman at a time when the question of a union was being mooted; "we would unite with you only to rob you." Modern Englishmen are sometimes bewildered when they discover that the Irishman, whom they regard as, on the whole, a poor relation getting more than his fair share of doles, accepts Johnson and Byron as having foretold and summed up with perfect accuracy the history of Ireland during the nineteenth century. From an Irish point of view, it astonishes many people to learn, the reign of Queen Victoria was a tale of disaster and horror to a scarcely less degree than that of Elizabeth. In the course of it, population fled, wealth emigrated, taxation increased, the fields went out of cultivation, hundreds of thousands of people perished by famine, hundreds of thousands of others were evicted, the language sank into decay, the national culture dwindled, almost everything that makes a nation, save faith and purpose, seemed to be inevitably melting away. Even Ulster, which had been so eager and integral a part of Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century, became more and more indoctrinated with a seventeenth-century terror

of the Pope and threw off the last remnants of her once proud Nationalism. She was Nationalist Ulster at the end of the eighteenth century; she was Unionist Ulster by the end of the nineteenth. That is one of the tragedies of Irish history.

In order to understand the extent of the ruin of Ireland during the nineteenth century, it is important to remember that at the time of the Union the population of Ireland was 5,395,456, or more than half that of Great Britain (10,500,956). By the end of the century, the population of Ireland was 4,458,775, or considerably less than one-eighth of that of Great Britain (36,999,940). How many other nations in Europe are there which declined in population, not only comparatively but absolutely, during the greatest century of expansion that the world has seen? This alone, however, would not give the measure of Ireland's falling out of the race during the century. Pitt, Castlereagh and their supporters, recognising that Ireland was a poorer country than England, had foretold that the Union would bring the two nations more nearly on an economic level. Ireland, as the first result of it, was to import English capital. Instead of this, as Irishmen foresaw, Ireland began to export her own capital, and continued to do so till the end of the century. In the first place the landlords in increasing numbers flocked to London instead of Dublin, and it has been estimated that not less than £105,000,000 of Irish capital was exported to England in the form of rents in the first thirty years after the Union. After the amalgamation of the Irish and British Exchequers — which was deferred till 1817 — the Treasury, like the landlord, became an absentee; and, while Ireland contributed to the revenue in a single year (1819-1820) the sum of £5,256,564, only a fraction of this, or £1,564,880, was returned to be

used for Irish purposes. Thus Ireland, instead of being made an equal part of a kingdom, became merely a tributary province, paying out of her poverty something like £4,000,000 a year to support an empire that had, from the Irish point of view, done her as little service as the Turkish Empire has done Armenia. It was, I think, Lord MacDonnell's estimate in 1911 that, quite over and above the cost of Irish administration, England had taken from Ireland during the preceding ninety-three years more than £325,000,000. It is important that anyone who wishes to understand the Irish view of the Union should realise that during the nineteenth century Ireland was a country from which money was being drained, not a country to which money was being given. Not until the introduction of Old Age Pensions was there an Irish deficit in the Budget—a deficit that has disappeared during the war. It is easy to imagine the results to Ireland of the loss of her capital during the early years of a century of industrial development. In the year of the passing of the Union there were 91 woollen manufacturers in Dublin, employing 4938 hands. In 1840 these numbers, instead of having risen, had declined to 12 manufacturers, employing 682 hands. These figures are typical. Scarcely an industry was able to progress save the linen of the north, which, though hampered to a certain extent, had received "most-favoured-industry" treatment in the eighteenth century. "Can we doubt," asked Professor Kettle, reviewing some of these facts, "that in overtaxation and the withdrawal of capital we have the prime *causa causans* of the decay of Ireland under the Union?"

The truth is, the history of Ireland in the nineteenth century has been the history, not of two nations governing jointly, but of one nation governing

another against its will. One may accept as symbolical of the history of the century the fact that between 1829 and 1858 twenty-three Irish land-reform Bills were brought into the House of Commons and every one of them was rejected, while during the same period thirty-five Coercion Bills were introduced and every one of them passed. The way in which the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed in 1829 was also characteristic of the government of Ireland under the Union. In the first place, the Duke of Wellington pushed the measure through Parliament on the ground, not that the Irish had voted for it constitutionally, but that they would rise in rebellion if it were refused. In the second place, the Government, while emancipating Catholics with their right hand, disfranchised a great mass of them — the forty-shilling freeholders — with their left. The immediate result was that the landlords, who had hitherto cut up their estates into small farms for forty-shilling freeholders who would vote for them at elections, now cleared their estates of all these small farmers as undesirables and threw them out of the only industry—the land—which had been permitted to survive. Once more the poor and dispossessed multiplied. When the Great Famine came at the end of the forties, it went through an impoverished nation like a scythe. The number of those who died of hunger during the Famine has been estimated by a Registrar-General at 729,033, and another 200,000 persons are estimated to have died in the "coffin-ships" in which they sought to fly from a plague-stricken land. Thus, as Bright said, more human beings perished in Ireland during the Famine than had fallen by the sword in any war England had ever waged. And the most appalling fact in the situation was that the Famine was preventible even at the last moment, had it not been

for the Westminster Parliament. There was an abundance of corn and cattle in Ireland in 1846 and 1847; it was only the potato crop that had failed. Had a native Parliament been in being, it would obviously have done what other European Parliaments had done in similar circumstances—what, indeed, the wisest Irishmen of the time advised: it would have prohibited the export of any food-stuffs whatever until the people of the country were fed. The landlords, however, were waiting for their rents, and the corn and cattle had to be exported to pay them. Peel, instead of prohibiting the export of corn from Ireland, facilitated the import of corn into the country by removing the duties on it. This meant that the price of corn fell sufficiently low to ruin the Irish farmer who had corn to sell, but not sufficiently low to be within the reach of the starving Irish peasant, who had nothing left to him by this time but his immortal soul. There have been few more terrible episodes in history than this, as the Irish regard it, Government-caused famine.

It was not till the coming of the Fenian movement in the sixties that Irish opinion began to have the slightest effect on legislation for Ireland. The Fenians, like the United Irishmen, were republicans. They had a powerful organisation in America, and thousands of their members were in the ranks of the Irish police and the British Army. Their rising in 1867 failed—it was a mere flash-in-the-pan—but Mr Gladstone, Lord Dufferin, Lord Derby and other public men confessed that it at least did something to awaken opinion in England about Ireland. The Irish (Protestant) Church was immediately disestablished, and the first of the great Land Acts passed. Out of the failure of Fenianism rose the modern Home Rule movement in 1870. O'Connell had demanded Repeal of the Union in the forties;

he had declared—wisely, as I think, from the national point of view—that for the government of Ireland he would prefer an Irish Parliament without Catholic emancipation to a British Parliament with Catholic emancipation. He failed, however, to restore an Irish nation within the Empire, as Emmet failed in 1803 and Young Ireland failed in 1848 to restore an Irish nation outside the Empire. The Home Rule movement—first under Isaac Butt and afterwards under Parnell—was a movement to establish an Irish nation within the British Empire on a much more limited scale than O'Connell's. Butt was a Federalist with Conservative instincts, and Parnell, though he desired the restoration of Grattan's Parliament, was satisfied with the "practical independence" inside the British Empire guaranteed in Mr Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill. Thus it will be seen that Irish Nationalist opinion during the nineteenth century hesitated only upon one point—whether the re-establishment of the historic Irish nation should take place inside or outside the British Empire. What the average Nationalist has always desired above all things is a workable constitution, a resident Parliament, and the liberty to solve his national difficulties, develop his national resources and express his national genius.

It is easy, I think, to trace a "stream of tendency" in the life of Ireland down through the centuries. Ireland has the persistent passions of a nation. We find her attempting to restore her nationhood now by constitutional and now by revolutionary means; beaten back at one door, she attempts to enter by another. She has done something in recent years to build up a national literary life, a national "cultural" life, a national industrial life, a national farming life. Her political life, however, has been disastrously blocked. Of all the useful remedial

legislation that has been passed for her since the time of Gladstone, there is practically nothing that an Irish Parliament would not have passed at least a generation earlier. The Land Acts, for instance, were merely belated concessions, not to the votes of the Irish electors, but to their violence in the days of the Land League and later associations of the same kind. In other words, Ireland, instead of being permitted to make her own laws, has been forced to resort to lawlessness in order to obtain suitable laws from what she regards as an absentee Parliament. English partisan historians, a witty Irishman once said, found Ireland a nation and left her a question. It seems to me that, until English statesmen read enough history to know that it is the Irish nation, not the Irish question, which has to be dealt with, there is not the slightest chance of settled friendship between the two peoples. The Irishman regards himself as the heir of Irish history: the Englishman is inclined to behave as though there were no such thing as Irish history. Irish history, however, exists as a witness in the Irishman's favour. It is a history of the decadence of a nation—even the agrarian revolution has not put an end to this decadence—owing to the absence of freedom. In the twentieth century, will England adopt an attitude of hostility to national ideals in Ireland while, as Mr Sydney Brooks has said, ideals of the same sort would attract her enthusiasm and support in any other country in Europe—Poland, Bohemia or Serbia? This is not only a question of justice, but, as I have said, a question affecting world-politics and the future peace of the world.

CHAPTER VI

SINN FEIN

SINN FEIN is a policy which it is easy to understand and easier still to misunderstand. Those who prefer to misunderstand it say that "Sinn Fein" means "Ourselves Alone." Mr Lloyd George and Mr Herbert Samuel have both attacked it on this ground. "Sinn Fein," unfortunately for them, does not mean "Ourselves Alone" any more than "God Save the King" means "God Save the King Alone." It means simply "Ourselves." The name was chosen to indicate not a policy of national selfishness but a policy of national self-reliance in contrast to a policy of waiting for the good-will of the British Parliament to make Ireland a nation. Even when the phrase, "Ourselves Alone" ("Sinn Fein Amháin"), is used, it is used in the same sense. It has no other meaning than that it is upon the courage, self-sacrifice, unity and exertions of Irishmen themselves that the future of the Irish nation depends. "The basis of the policy," Mr Arthur Griffith, who founded it, has said, "is national self-reliance. No law and no series of laws can make a nation out of a people which distrusts itself." The spectacle of the statesmen of a great Empire which has just added to its dominions Egypt, Mesopotamia, Palestine and immense tracts of Africa, taunting Ireland with pursuing a policy of selfish ambition is more ironical than inspiring.

Another popular misunderstanding in regard to

Sinn Fein arises from the belief that it is a policy of armed insurrection. It is nothing of the sort. The insurrection of Easter week, 1916, was not a Sinn Fein insurrection, but a Fenian insurrection. As a leading Sinn Fein writer, Mr P. S. O'Hegarty, says, "of the seven men who signed the republican proclamation only one was in any sense a Sinn Feiner—Sean MacDiarmada—and most of the others would have objected very strongly to being identified with Sinn Fein." Luckily for Sinn Fein, however, the journalists and the politicians all spoke of the "Sinn Fein rebellion," and the Government arrested and deported Sinn Feiners and Fenians indiscriminately. When the insane harshness with which the leaders of the rebellion were treated produced a reaction in Ireland, it was to Sinn Fein that the people turned in their anger and resentment. Fenianism was, after all, a secret movement, a conspiracy, and it is not easy to organise a whole nation into a secret society. Secret societies are disliked both by the clergy and by the middle classes. Sinn Fein, while sharing most of the ideas of the Fenians, had the advantage of being an open movement, which a priest or burgess could join without committing himself to violent courses. Sinn Fein, it should always be remembered, had originally come into being as an alternative not only to constitutional Nationalism but to Fenianism. True, Sinn Fein differed from Fenianism only in regard to methods, while it differed from the Parliamentarian Nationalists on a point of principle. Sinn Fein did not say that the Fenian methods were wrong: it merely doubted if they were practical. It did definitely say that the Parliamentarian methods were wrong. Sinn Fein did not say that it was immoral to take arms against England: it did say that it was immoral for Irishmen to attend an English Parliament and to

take an oath of allegiance to the King of England. Thus, though Sinn Fein may be called a passive-resistance movement as opposed to an active-resistance movement, it is easy to understand how it has come to be confused in the minds both of statesmen and the public with physical-force Nationalism. The confusion has been greatly increased by the fact that, since the insurrection, the ablest of the physical-force Nationalists have been content to work in the passive-resistance ranks of Sinn Fein. Sinn Fein, too, accepts the tradition of physical force in the past, though it does not advocate it in the present. It will be seen that, if Sinn Fein turns aside from physical force, it is not for Tolstoyan reasons. If Sinn Fein objects to physical force, it is because it objects to failure.

One remembers with astonishment the fact that the Sinn Fein policy, which has now conquered three-fourths of Ireland, seemed already to be dead and done for two or three years before the war. The Irish people, like Sinn Fein itself, are lovers of success, and at that time Mr Redmond's Home Rule policy seemed likely to succeed. Irishmen, like the members of other small nationalities, have wavered a good deal between a policy of absolute separation and a policy of Home Rule. They have been passionately bent on winning their liberty, but they have not been fanatical in their definition of liberty. At one time they have been largely republican; at another time, they have been enthusiastic for a Home Rule Parliament. Parnell converted them into Home Rulers because he persuaded them he could succeed in getting Home Rule. Unionist agitators always make great play with the argument that Irish Nationalists are all separatists at heart and only consent to accept Home Rule, when they do consent, with their tongues in their cheeks.

Mr O'Hegarty apparently agrees with the Unionists on this point. It is a misreading of the facts. The Irish Parliamentary leaders, and their chief followers, believe in Home Rule within the British Empire, not because they cannot get separation, but because they believe that the position of a free nation inside the British Empire would be best for Ireland. Parnell worked with the Fenians, especially after he had been driven out of the leadership, but he was clearly an anti-separatist. The same may be said of Mr Dillon and Mr Redmond. These distinguished Irishmen were not hypocrites. They said moderate things because they believed moderate things. Similarly, the Ireland that followed them was a genuinely moderate Home Rule Ireland. Home Rule at that time seemed a straight, smooth road to liberty. When it was found to be merely a road of insult and futility, barred by armed men under the direction of ignominious persons such as "Galloper" Smith (now Lord Chancellor of England), the majority of Irishmen began to wonder whether the steep and thorny way to an Irish Republic might not after all afford more hopeful travelling. The treatment of the insurgent leaders after Easter week convinced them that the policy of England in Ireland was one not of co-operation but of conquest. They saw as in a sudden vision their country being ruled by foreigners by the sword. The nation that has been haunted by this terrific vision and that can yet go on following moderate counsellors has not yet appeared on the earth.

At the same time, I am inclined to think that the part played by Easter week in the conversion of Ireland to Sinn Fein has been exaggerated. The European War did as much, I believe, to turn Irishmen into Sinn Feiners as the Irish Rebellion did. The leading statesmen in the Allied countries all became

propagandists of the gospel of nationalism as opposed to the gospel of aggressive imperialism. They declared that the war was a war on behalf of the small nations, and prominent men began preaching separatism to small nations that had hitherto been largely content with Home Rule ideals. As a result of this propaganda, Bohemia is now an independent republic under the presidency of the ex-Home Ruler, Dr Masaryk. Poland is also politically free to a degree that no responsible Pole would have deemed possible a few years ago. Similarly, Finland, which recently only desired its liberty inside the Russian Empire, has as a result of the war been proclaimed a separate republic. It will be seen that the movement away from Home Rulism towards separatism and republicanism is not a peculiarly Irish phenomenon. It has swept along with it every subject nation in Europe. One cannot preach a crusade for liberty without scattering abroad ideas of liberty. One cannot fight for liberty without popularising it. Whether it was a result of the war or the propaganda, there is no question that during the last few years a far more advanced philosophy of liberty has taken root in the imagination of peoples. The right of self-determination, of every people to choose their own rulers, is now accepted in an absolute sense by hundreds of thousands of thoughtful men and women who not long ago would have dismissed it as too far beyond the bounds of practicability to be worth troubling about. In Ireland, as in Bohemia, Poland and Finland, the war was bound to produce just such an extension of the ideal of national liberty. If the Sinn Fein policy had not already existed, Ireland would have had to invent it in the course of the war, even though there had been no Volunteers in the country and no insurrection. As a matter of fact, the war has added in one important respect

to the ideals of Sinn Fein. It has made Sinn Fein definitely republican. Before the war, official Sinn Fein did not demand for Ireland a position of greater independence in relation to England than Hungary had in relation to Austria. The rank-and-file of the movement were always republicans. The leaders are now republicans as well.

Sinn Fein, however, as Mr O'Hegarty points out in his able and useful little book, is not merely, or perhaps even mainly, a political movement. It is an attempt to rebuild a nation, and its policy is even more constructive in purpose than separatist. Mr O'Hegarty thinks of it as the child not of Fenianism so much as of the Gaelic League. To the Sinn Feiner the history of the past seven hundred years is the record of the war waged by English kultur on Irish civilisation. The death of Irish civilisation seems to him an even more appalling tragedy than the death of Irish liberty. Hence he regards the foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893 as a far more important event in history than anything connected with the name of O'Connell or Parnell, or even of Wolfe Tone or John Mitchel. The Gaelic League began with the ideal of saving the Irish speech and culture in the already Irish-speaking districts. Its vision has grown till it now dreams of an Ireland that has won back its past from the disasters of seven centuries, and that will renew its connections with those sources of the national genius which have already given the world Irish legend, Irish music and Irish imaginative speech. Sinn Fein in the noblest of its aspects is but a Nationalist adaptation of the saying: "The kingdom of heaven is within you." It is founded on a belief that each nation has a sort of "inner light," fidelity to which alone will save it. The Sinn Feiner is not, as some of his critics allege,

opposed to the brotherhood of nations. He is opposed merely to the subjection of nations. He believes that the genius, culture and speech of every nation is worth preserving, and that to consent to servitude to a foreign kultur is a sin against the light. Thus his objection to the Anglicisation of Ireland is not an objection to Shakespeare or even to Mr Wells. It is an objection to the destruction of Irish civilisation. Most Englishmen refuse to believe that such a thing ever existed. One would have thought it would be impossible even to listen to a traditional Irish song without knowing better.

It is easy to see how the belief in the equal rights of civilisations was bound to express itself politically as separatism. The Sinn Feiner believes in the right of Ireland to be a sovereign nation in a society of sovereign nations. He would, no doubt, acquiesce in limitations of national sovereignty if the citizens of all the other nations did the same. But no one can understand Sinn Fein who does not see that it is based on the view that Ireland is a historic nation with the same rights to independence and self-expression that England or France or Serbia or Bohemia has. It is because he believes this that the Sinn Feiner regards abstention from the House of Commons as so important a part of his programme. The thought of going to the House of Commons and swearing allegiance to King George fills him with the same horror as an Englishman would have felt during the war at the thought of going to the Reichstag and taking an oath of allegiance to the Kaiser. He thinks that to do such a thing would be to drag his country under the yoke before the eyes of mankind. That is the essence of the Sinn Fein point of view. Many writers and speakers are content to dismiss Sinn Fein as

"lunacy." It would be better to inquire what it really is. To dismiss as lunacy a movement that has captured the greater part of a nation—and not merely the fanatics, but the average intelligent, cautious and peace-loving citizens—is to beg the question.

As to what would happen to Sinn Fein if a "Dominion Home Rule" constitution were granted to Ireland the prophets differ. The mass of opinion favours the belief that the Irish people would accept and work such a constitution. Would Sinn Fein survive? That, of course, is an entirely different question from "Ought it to survive?" Prophets differ as regards the ultimate destiny of Ireland as they differ regarding the ultimate destiny of South Africa. There would certainly ensue great battles for making the schools and universities Irish, for the protection of Irish industries, for the creation of direct communication with the other countries of the world. Orthodox Sinn Fein is at present Protectionist and may continue so even in a self-governed Ireland, but Labour (which is also in a sense Sinn Fein) may easily find itself in the opposite camp on this point. These, however, are problems for the future. Sinn Fein at present contains both reactionary and progressive elements, and as a party it might conceivably develop in either direction. At present it is neither Conservative nor democratic, neither clerical nor anti-clerical, neither capitalist nor labourist. It is an attempt to unite men of conflicting schools of thought on the common policy of rebuilding the Irish nation with Irish brains and hands, and of organising the people to work out their own salvation on the soil of Ireland. In another aspect, it is a denial of the right of England to rule Ireland and a policy of refusing to acquiesce in English rule

by attending Parliament, entering the Army, or recognising the right of English-appointed judges to sit in trial over Irishmen. It seems to me to be the most remarkable and also the most promising political experiment in Irish history.

CHAPTER VII

THE INSURRECTION OF 1916

I

If Matthew Arnold had been alive, he would no doubt have seen in the last Irish insurrection but another confirmation of his theory that the Celt is a person always ready to react against the despotism of fact. He would have regarded it as a typically Celtic adventure for a few hundred Irishmen to declare war upon the British Empire at a moment when the British Empire was at least ten times more powerful in men, guns and munitions than she had ever been in history. He would hardly have been surprised that a body of Celts should have overlooked the fact that rifles are as useless against modern artillery as pikes are against rifles. And with sadly ironical lips he would have quoted his favourite sentence from Ossian: "They went forth to the war, but they always fell." Since Matthew Arnold's day, we have come to doubt the racial explanation of everything that bewilders us in Irish character and politics. For one thing many of the authorities on race have denied that the Irishman is, apart from the inhabitants of certain western seaboards, a Celt at all. Professor A. C. Haddon has even gone as far as to assert that there is more Celtic blood in England than in Ireland. This may seem a mere game of professors, but it is all to the good in so far as it prevents Englishmen from failing to see their own responsibility for the unrest of

Ireland. The ruling fact which England—or any other country which wishes to understand Ireland—has got to recognise is that Ireland is the home, not of a mob of Celts, but of a nation of Irishmen.

That is the leading fact about Ireland to-day, as it has been for centuries. Yet it is a fact which the authorities in Ireland have been reluctant to admit, even since the passing of the Home Rule Bill. The passing of the Home Rule Bill in the early months of the war left Ireland with Home Rule on paper and with Dublin Castle in reality. At the same time the great majority of the Nationalists, as well as the Unionists, ranged themselves, as I have already said, with England, France and Belgium, in the war against Germany. In the first place they regarded the case of Belgium as somewhat analogous to the case of Ireland. In the second place they believed that upon their attitude at this crisis depended the freedom of Ireland still more than the freedom of Belgium. There was, to be sure, a dissentient minority even at the beginning of the war. But if Ireland had been granted Home Rule in the week in which the war broke out, that minority would never have risen above a handful. I do not mean that Home Rule would have been accepted as a final national settlement by the Sinn Fein Nationalists, but that the Sinn Feiners would have joined enthusiastically with the Home Rule majority in making self-government a success. Unhappily, Sir Edward Carson barred the way with a hundred thousand armed Ulstermen. He demanded not only that Ireland should not have immediate Home Rule, but that the Home Rule Bill should not be passed into law while the war lasted. The result was a compromise by which Home Rule was passed into law, but the law was not to come into operation till the war was over. Home Rule, as Sir Edward

boasted to his followers, had become an Act, but not a fact. That was one of the fatal successes of Sir Edward Carson which led almost inevitably to the insurrection of Easter Monday.

Sir Edward Carson and his armed men had the good fortune never to fire a shot, because nobody ever opposed them. At the time of their gun-running exploit at Larne, they took policemen and custom-house officers prisoners; they took possession of railway stations; they earthed the telegraph system; they held the roads with armed sentries. Had they been interfered with by soldiers and policemen, either they would have shot them or they would have given in. However, it was the authorities that gave in, and Carsonism, with its boatload of arms from Germany, enjoyed a bloodless triumph. But it was not only Carsonism that triumphed on this occasion; it was the idea of physical force. Everybody of ordinary intelligence knew that the physical force of Ulster could do nothing against the physical force of a united England. But England did not happen to be united. Not only did a great part of the English Press and English society offer unlimited support to Ulster, but even the army was tampered with, and officers were told that it was unthinkable that they should be asked to shoot down their fellow-subjects (an Irishman of the north being, apparently, a fellow-subject, but an Irishman of the south not). Clearly, the Ulster Volunteer Force was merely the spear-head on a shaft consisting of much of the English aristocracy and plutocracy, and it was aimed straight at the heart of Irish nationality. The Liberal Government — despite protests from their followers—looked on, less like masters of the situation than like spectators with their mouths open. Many Nationalists suddenly became alarmed lest the argument of arms was

the only argument that was going to be listened to, and it was the only argument in favour of self-government with which they had neglected to provide themselves.

The first news the general public heard of the introduction of arms into politics in the south of Ireland related, not to orthodox Nationalists, but to unskilled labourers in Dublin. Only a few months before the war, a terrible six months' strike had been brought to a close in Dublin, to the huge delight of the employers—and some leading Sinn Feiners—who believed they had crushed labour agitation in Ireland for a life-time. Before the strike was over, however, the Irish Citizen Army had been formed, and the part played by this body under the leadership of James Connolly in the recent insurrection suggests the madness of crushing the poor with too unreflecting a ruthlessness. To the Irish Citizen Army insurrection must have presented itself as the only means of resurrection. Social revolution, at least as much as national revolution, was their aim. They were Socialists and Republicans as well as Nationalists.

But there was another armed body of Nationalists which came into existence at the same time as the Irish Citizen Army, or a little earlier. This was the National Volunteers which, though Mr Redmond is said to have been opposed to its formation, attracted into its ranks moderate as well as extreme Nationalists—those who were "loyal" and those who were "disloyal"—all of them with the single purpose of defending the unity and freedom of Ireland with their lives. At first Mr Redmond stood apart from it; then, as it grew, he saw he must either enter it or see a rival power taking control of the Nationalist movement. He consequently assumed control of the Volunteers, who were

drawn, indeed, for the most part, from the ranks of his own followers.

Then came the war and no Home Rule. Mr Redmond promised the Government the unqualified support of Ireland in the war, and offered the National Volunteers as a home-defence force in union with the Ulster Volunteers. His offer was not accepted by the Government; at the same time a number of the National Volunteer leaders declared that Mr Redmond had no right to make it, and even regarded it as an attempt to bring them unconditionally under the power of the British Government. They therefore seceded and organised themselves into a new body, the Irish Volunteers, under the presidency of Professor Eoin MacNeill, who was understood to be not a Sinn Feiner but a Home Ruler in politics. They took the view that in the war Ireland—an Ireland lacking the ABC of self-government—should remain neutral, just as certain Canadian Nationalists held that Canada should remain neutral. But as to their being then in any large degree pro-German, or contemplating an insurrection during the war, that is a fable. Undoubtedly, there were among them some who hated England sufficiently to be pro-anybody-you-please, and were filled with the belief that to die for Ireland even in a hopeless battle would in some mystical way help their country to become free. But these were a minority: they were extremists among extremists. The purpose that held the Irish Volunteers together was a defensive, not an offensive, purpose. The fact that the wisest and ablest of their leaders were opposed to the insurrection suggests that it was not the result of a plan preconcerted and long agreed upon by the Volunteers.

How then was the insurrection brought about? Some declare that it was all a German plot. Others

say that it was provoked by the authorities (or by certain subordinates). Others again hold that the less prudent leaders rushed the Volunteers into a hopeless venture in a spirit (as it has been described) of Christian Bushido. Others say that the rank and file of the Volunteers could never have been persuaded into so desperate an enterprise if they had not been convinced that the Government was about to attempt to disarm them. Certainly rumours of disarmament had been frequent, and the week before the insurrection a document was published containing a detailed plan for the suppression of the Volunteers. This has since been officially declared to be a forgery, but one may be certain that the great mass of the Volunteers believed it to be genuine. Who was the author of the document? Without the document, some people hold, there might have been no rising. Even some of the leaders who took part in the rising and were afterwards shot are said to have hesitated to give their voice for it till the last moment.

Mr Birrell is much blamed for not having prevented the insurrection. Dublin Castle is supposed under his influence to have governed Ireland with rose-water instead of the mailed fist. This is contrary to the fact. Armed bodies of Irishmen unquestionably enjoyed unparalleled freedom of marching and manœuvring where they pleased. But Dublin Castle, which never accepted the Birrell policy, harried most of them individually, ordered the deportation of some, and suppressed most of their papers. Neither Dublin Castle nor the War Office was willing to recognise the fact that, now that the Home Rule Bill had passed, Ireland was a nation by Act of Parliament, to leave any diviner authority out of consideration. Irishmen wrote to the English Press again and again, urging that it was madness to treat Ireland not as a nation but as a sort

of naughty English shire. They foretold that bloodshed was almost inevitable if the anti-national spirit went too far. But few of them foresaw a definite insurrection. When it came, it was a tragic collision of the anti-English with the anti-Irish spirit—of the unyielding with the unyielding. It might not have taken place if the English Government as a pledge of good faith had even begun to reconstruct the Irish Parliament House in preparation for the first Home Rule Parliament. But the Volunteers began by believing that Home Rule was never coming and ended by believing, so to speak, that it would not be worth taking when it came. I refer, of course, to the rank and file. The believers in a more intransigent nationalism would have remained in a small minority, even in the Volunteers, if the suspicion that Ireland was going to be tricked out of Home Rule had not become widespread.

I have attempted to explain the insurrection rather than to estimate it in terms of good and evil. But there is no doubt that the majority of Nationalists, on first hearing of it, regarded it as an unqualified evil. They looked on it as a rebellion, not against England, but against Ireland. They honoured the courage and idealism of young men who were eager to die for their country, but they felt that not for the first time in history men with good intentions had blundered. "It is the first time in history," one of them said to me, "that Irish rebels have been 'bad Europeans.'" The general opinion in Ireland on the insurrection may not have been based on European considerations, but it was none the less hostile. But the executions of the leaders of the revolt, doled out (as it were) day after day, transformed condemnation of the insurrection into horror at the Bloody Assize which followed it. The courts martial converted the revolt of a minority into

an episode in national history. They made people who had looked on the insurrection with detestation see the leaders in the blazing light of martyrdom. One is aware of a transformation of this sort in one's own mind. If clemency like Botha's had been exercised, thousands of Nationalists would have regarded the insurgents as brave men unwittingly doing a great injury to Ireland. As it is, one can see them now only as Irishmen lined up against a wall and dying for Ireland, dying for a dream at the hands of men who did not understand, or wish to understand, the dream. Never was England madder than to add in this way to the bitter memories that already existed in Ireland. Probably, however, not a single one of the soldiers who sat on those fatal courts martial had ever read a line of Irish history. If they had, they would hardly have dared to order a shot to be fired.

II

Lord Dunsany, himself an Irish soldier, in the course of an introduction to a book of verse by another Irish soldier, Francis Ledwidge, is careful to warn the English reader in regard to one or two poems which may seem to have an air of sedition about them. These poems, which are contained in a volume called *Songs of Peace*, are laments for Thomas MacDonagh, Joseph Plunkett and the other men of letters who were executed after the Dublin rising. One of them, "The Blackbirds," begins:

> I heard the Poor Old Woman say:
> "At break of day the fowler came,
> And took my blackbirds from their songs,
> Who loved me well through shame and blame."

And it goes on to picture the skylark and other birds doing honour to the dead singers. Lord Dunsany,

fearing that such poems may be misunderstood, begs the reader "rather than attribute curious sympathies to this brave young Irish soldier, . . . to consider the irresistible attraction that a lost cause has for almost any Irishman." For my part, I think it is better that everyone should realise that the Irish soldier, like the Irish civilian, has in fact "curious sympathies," and that to ignore these sympathies, as they were ignored again and again in the course of the war, and especially in the harsh measures that were taken after the Easter rising, is political lunacy. Even the most ordinary worldly wisdom, I should have thought, would suggest that to give surrendered foes an opportunity to reveal their genius for dying nobly is to burn up all the mistakes of their lives in the blazing glory of their deaths. The Irish insurrection was not a success until fifteen men had been shot and one hanged for it. How far it has become a success since then may be judged by the fact that a corporal in the British army wrote poems "in barracks" in praise of the dead leaders. It is not that he was a pro-German or a hater of England. Irishmen who felt not only a patriotism of Ireland but a patriotism of Europe in the war, and who would have regarded a German victory as one of the greatest catastrophes of history, were in most cases, I think, far more horrified by the methods by which the insurrection was suppressed than by the insurrection. It is certainly the tragic close of the insurrection which has made it already so exciting a theme for historians.

The leading historians of the insurrection, Messrs W. B. Wells and N. Marlowe, contend that "the Rebellion of 1916 was . . . the best conceived and, up to a certain point, the best executed in the whole history of Irish risings," and that the plans of the leaders, "concerted with Germany's agents, displayed a strategic instinct of a high order." They suggest

that, "but for a series of accidents, it might easily have confronted not Ireland alone, but the whole Kingdom, with the gravest menace that it has so far encountered in the great war." Their opening chapter on Ireland's strategic importance in relation especially to British sea-power strikes the keynote of their book. They apparently regard the plans of the insurgent leaders as having seriously threatened both British sea-power and British land-power. But it seems to me that, while the British navy was supreme on the seas and the majority of the Irish people sympathetic to the cause of the Allies, the menace to British sea-power could only be infinitesimal. If Ireland were hostile, whether under the Union or whether in enjoyment of the widest independence, she could no doubt give assistance to German submarines in her many bays. But no Irish State would ever tolerate that. And as for the threat to British land-power, the war has shown, as Mr. H. G. Wells pointed out the other day, that successful war has now become impossible for any non-industrialised population, and it is a hundred times more impossible for any population which does not even possess artillery and the means of constantly renewing its stores of munitions. No doubt, had a German submarine fleet at work in the Irish Sea been able to prevent English transports from crossing to Dublin, and had an effective attack by the German Fleet on the east coast of England deprived the British Government at the same time of the power to send a sufficient number of soldiers over to Ireland the insurrection would have taken longer to suppress, but with only one side armed with modern artillery the work of suppression could not have lasted many days. This point seems to me to need to be emphasised, as the historians blame the British Government for making light to the world of the seriousness of the

insurrection. "Its policy of minimising the gravity of the Rebellion," they write, "inevitably threw into disproportionately high relief the punishment inflicted on the leaders of the rising, and the measures taken for the pacification of Ireland." They express no opinion on the wisdom or justice of the severe measures of the authorities. But they suggest that a large section of Irish opinion thought the punishments excessive only because they were led to regard the rebellion as just a little one. I doubt that.

Whether one agrees with it or not, however, one follows with intense interest the reconstruction of the Irish rebellion as an incident of European significance, like the Irish War for James II. and the plan of the United Irishmen for calling in Napoleon. The authors suggest that there was not "adequate material for a serious Irish rebellion" in the situation, had it not been for "external stimulus and support." On the other hand, the suppression of the Larkinites, the methods of Sir Edward Carson, the Curragh "mutiny," and the formation of the Coalition Government had all contributed to an atmosphere of unrest and angry despair in many parts of Ireland which had not until then shown any revolutionary leanings. Then there was the infection of the war spirit in a time of almost universal war. The historian has to take account of a hundred causes which combined to bring matters to a head. I notice that Messrs Wells and Marlowe are of opinion that even the over-taxation of Ireland had something to do with leading up to the outbreak.

"With the increase of taxation since the outbreak of the war, Ireland was now paying for Irish expenditure to the full, and in addition £5,000,000 annually as an Imperial contribution, although it had been argued during the debates on the Home

Rule Bill, both by the Unionists and Liberals, that Ireland was then taxed to the utmost, and the only possible road to solvency in a self-governed Ireland would be by way of economies in administration. . . . Nor did the money go, as it went in England, to the stimulation of war industries."

"The Irish Party at this time," they hold, "would probably have taken some of the wind out of the revolutionists' sails if they had attacked the Budget and withdrawn their support from the Government." Certainly the financial grievance was a contributory cause of Irish discontent, but hardly to the point of revolution.

As to how far the Volunteers ever intended revolution, instead of mere armed defence against the policy of Unionism, there is as yet no means of judging. Some of the leaders did not attempt to conceal their belief that revolution, if it could not free Ireland, would at least help Ireland on its way towards freedom. But Messrs Wells and Marlowe hold, with the majority of those who have written on the subject, that the rank and file of the Volunteers did not know on Easter Monday that an insurrection was about to take place. "Most of the men who assembled under the instructions of their Commandants at the various centres at 10 o'clock on the morning of Easter Monday," they declare, "entertained no other idea than that they were to take part, as announced, in a parade or route march; and it says much for the discipline of the Volunteers that they obeyed loyally and with alacrity the summons of the leaders which called them at high noon to engage them in armed rebellion against the King." As is well known, even the leaders were at variance as to the wisdom of the insurrection. "Finally the argument of the labour element pre-

vailed, and by a small majority the council of the rebel leaders decided upon immediate action." Messrs Wells and Marlowe contend, however, that, though certain labour leaders advocated insurrection, the labouring classes were not with them. "The women of the slums, many of them the wives of soldiers, were enraged by the Republican proclamation and attacked the rebel leaders before the Post Office with bottles and a most violent language." There is no doubt, as Sir Morgan O'Connell, a Unionist landlord, stated before the Rebellion Commission, that "when the war started, the vast majority of Irishmen were in sympathy with England," even though in the Curragh period, as is suggested elsewhere, the opinion forced itself on many people that "English military power was in the last resort the enemy of Irish nationality." Even after years of what Irishmen regarded as unjust treatment, Messrs Wells and Marlowe assure us, "the mass of popular opinion manifested itself unmistakably as not with the rebels."

Their book will, I think, take its place as the standard history of Easter week for many years to come. It is not a piece of ephemeral journalism, but an able essay in history. The authors seldom accept any statement for which they cannot produce evidence, though occasionally they do publish such a paragraph as: "The most conspicuous defect in the military organisation of the Volunteers was the lack of efficient staff work, but in this department the resources of Germany were called in aid, and voluminous *memoranda* on the higher direction of affairs reached the headquarters through various channels from Washington and Berlin." On the other hand, they will not accept the theory—a theory for which there is abundant evidence—that Sir Roger Casement went to Ireland to prevent the rising, not

to advocate or lead it. The fact that he did not plead this at his trial—a fact urged by Messrs Wells and Marlowe against the theory—is said to have been due to his generous feeling that he could not publicly dissociate himself from men who had died for the same ideals as his own.

CHAPTER VIII

ULSTER: THE FACTS OF THE CASE

ULSTER'S fear of Home Rule or any other form of national governnent is a much simpler and more intelligible thing than is sometimes admitted. What the Ulsterman fears most of all is that under Home Rule he will not enjoy self-government. He is sometimes painted as a person who is determined at all costs not to surrender a position of ascendancy for one of equality. But that is hardly fair to the average Ulsterman. He has usually allowed himself to be led by men who believed in the gospel of the top-dog and did their best to live up to it; but there have also always been tens of thousands of Ulstermen who were instinctively democrats, and who would never have opposed Home Rule but for the dread that it would mean not the reign of equality but the reign of a new sort of ascendancy. What men of this kind fear is that in an Irish Parliament they will be given laws they do not want, like a subject people.

Oddly enough, they argue that the Irishman enjoys equality in the "United Kingdom" because he has a vote and is allowed to send representatives to the Parliament in London. They fail to see that according to this argument the Ulsterman must enjoy equality in a self-governed Ireland because he will have a vote and be able to send representatives to the Parliament in Dublin. As a Nationalist, I naturally hold that freedom consists in something

more than the right to send representatives to somebody else's Parliament. But the point that has just been made is worth making as a reminder to the Ulsterman that, even were the worst to come to the worst, an Ulster Party in a Dublin Parliament would be proportionately far larger and more powerful than an Irish Party in the present British House of Commons. An Ulster Party could easily wreck any Irish Parliament that attempted injustice to Ulster.

It may be worth inquiring, however, whether there are any grounds for the fear of the moderate Ulsterman—I use the word "Ulsterman," of course, in the customary political sense—that he will not enjoy self-government in a self-governed Ireland. He has been legislated for to some extent by Irish Nationalists in the past. Which of the laws demanded and won by Irish Nationalists in the last fifty years has been contrary to the wishes of the ordinary Ulsterman? Land Act after Land Act has been gained. Who can deny that the Land Acts represent the wishes of the Presbyterian farmers of County Antrim as well as of the Catholics of County Galway? Orange tenants, again, are as quick to take advantage of the Town Tenants Act as if they lived in Tipperary and went to Mass. It would be impossible, I think, to name a single law agitated for and won by Nationalist Irishmen in the last fifty years which the ordinary Ulster Protestant really would like to see repealed. The Ulsterman's quarrel with the Nationalists is not with the laws they have made or compelled to be made. It is with the laws he imagines they would like to make if they dared. His terror of Nationalism is not based on the legislative record of Nationalism (which consists of Land Acts, the Town Tenants Act, Acts about trade-marks, harbours, local government

and education), but on some such fantastic theory as that if he marries a Catholic (whom he does not, except in a very rare instance, want to marry) an Irish Parliament will declare the marriage invalid. He thinks of Nationalists chiefly as people who desire to penalise him. He thinks, too, that even if they would not penalise him through vindictiveness, they would ruin him through incompetence.

The worst of illusions of this kind is that they are so difficult to destroy. They have the strength of principles, not of arguments. Reason is almost powerless against them. All the same, one is bound to go on reasoning. It is necessary to keep on asking the Unionist Ulsterman to mention any one point in regard to which the legislative ideals of North and South have clashed in the past. If Ulster had enjoyed complete self-government in the past, would she have passed the laws for which Nationalists have been responsible, or would she have been content with the laws which satisfied the Ulster Tory leaders? It is one of the paradoxes of the Irish situation that in most matters the Ulsterman has been far more in sympathy with the legislative policy of the Nationalists than with that of his own leaders. Lord Londonderry and Col. Saunderson had his vote, but Parnell and Davitt represented his ideals, so far at least as the land was concerned. The division between Ulster and the South has for the most part not been a division of interests, but a division of political leaders.

As regards the future also, our interests are at one. Ireland as a whole is an undeveloped country. Ulster and Munster are developed in a sense in which Connaught is not. But it is broadly true of the whole country, North and South, that its resources, intellectual and material, have been left in a state of neglect, and that even the richest parts

of Ulster are not rich according, say, to English and Scottish standards. The modern world is setting new standards of efficiency and education, and no people that does not take its own problems in hand and devote its united energies to solving them can expect to take its place among civilised and successful peoples. Even if Ulster did not come into an Irish Parliament she would have to learn to manage her own affairs. England has even now no time to manage Ulster land and Ulster education. All she can do is to place matters of this kind in the hands of a board. With the war over she has less time than ever to devote to the solution of the special problems of Ulster or of any other part of Ireland. If the Ulsterman wants to find eager allies in the work of draining the Bann, he will find them among the Irish Nationalists, not among even the best-intentioned English members. To the Englishman, the Bann drainage is a question of as little interest as the drainage of a district in China or Australia. To every Irishman it is a home problem, a thing about which one can get excited. It is a fact of human nature that problems can only be solved by those who are sufficiently interested in them to get excited about them.

The chief function of an Irish Parliament will be to focus the national mind on the various national problems. The Ulsterman may protest that Ulster problems are not the same as Irish problems. But the fact that Ulstermen have consentingly lived for so many years past under Irish laws, not English laws, as regards land, education, temperance, etc., suggests that what Ulster wants in all these matters is more like what Ireland wants than like what England wants. Had Ulster felt herself to be a part of Great Britain rather than of Ireland, she would long ago have insisted on being excluded

from all this specially Irish legislation. By remaining without protest under Irish laws she has, it seems to me, confessed her unity of interests with the rest of Ireland.

The only matter in regard to which I can imagine any serious difference of ideal between Ulster and the rest of Ireland is education. And in regard to education it seems to me obvious that Ulster can obtain complete provincial autonomy if she wishes it. The encouragement of industrial life, however, the discovery of new methods of increasing the food supply, the raising of the level of health and wealth and happiness for all the people—these are objects upon which the best brains of all the four provinces can concentrate, without any clash of principle. In regard to these objects, indeed, I hold that Ulster can only realise herself fully if she is willing to play her part in the general resurrection of Ireland. Outside Ireland she would merely be a backward and outlying province of Great Britain, with all her best sons emigrating to some happier soil. As part of the Irish nation, she will be the pioneer province of a country with immense untapped resources of every kind—a country which will attract the young and the enterprising instead of frightening them away. She will enjoy self-government because she will not—she does not even now—feel that her interests demand different laws from the interests of the rest of Ireland, and she will have a full share in making those laws. Judging by the way in which Ulster has lived under Irish law up till the present, she can never possibly feel a stranger, a nuisance, a bore, a bottom dog, a mere hostile element with different needs, in the Dublin Parliament, as Ireland has so often felt in the British House of Commons. Ulster is an integral part of Ireland to a degree to which Ireland has never been an integral part of

the "United Kingdom." She has never objected to Irish laws, but only to an Irish Parliament. She will have no objection to an Irish Parliament either, as soon as she realises that it will be, not an instrument for her subjection, but an instrument for the expression of her desires, her energies and her ideals. Most people outside Ulster take it for granted that Ulster is much more likely to dominate an Irish Parliament than to be dominated by it. One thing is certain. She will be able to impress her will on Dublin far more powerfully and effectively than Lancashire impresses her will on London. Can self-government go further than that?

CHAPTER IX

THE HESITATING SORT OF LIBERAL AND IRISH SELF-DETERMINATION

I

No man is greatly to be blamed for being in a muddle in years in which the whole frame of things has been tottering. I am convinced, however, that a great deal of the muddled thinking of the time is due, not to the general confusion of events, but merely to a confusion of words. I do not see how it is possible for political thought to become clear until we have ceased to give, as all of us sometimes give, the same word two opposite meanings. The word "Nationalism" is in this respect the most deceptive piece in the political vocabulary. Sometimes it is used to mean genuine Nationalism; sometimes it means Imperialism, which is the contrary of Nationalism. I realise that Nationalism may easily develop into Imperialism, just as self-confidence may easily develop through self-conceit into the spirit of self-aggrandisement. There is no virtue so secure that it cannot be altered into a denial of itself. Has not the very love of God been identified with the passion of persecution, cruelty, hate and murder? It should be the first duty of thinkers to prevent this fraud of words. Exchange of thought is almost impossible with a man who, when he says "white," means "black," and, when he says Lord Birkenhead, means Mr George Lansbury. It becomes quite impossible if, when he says Lord

Birkenhead he means sometimes Mr George Lansbury and sometimes Lord Birkenhead.

Yet that is the position as regards the use of the word Nationalism by practically everybody at one time or another. It is an undoubted fact that the party of expansion in various countries calls itself Nationalist when it should say Imperialist. But political philosophers should not allow themselves to be misled by camouflage of this sort. European thought would become infinitely more lucid if we reserved the word Nationalism for a nation's demand for an equal right of self-expression with other nations, and used the word Imperialism to signify the demand for the right of self-aggrandisement, even at the expense of other nations. Nationalism, it has been said, involves the theory of a democracy of nations; Imperialism involves the theory of a hierarchy of stronger nations with the right to subject weaker nations to their will. Nationalism is concerned with the building up of the life of a nation within its own borders, and implies that, in so far as its activities extend beyond its borders, they shall do so not by self-seeking violence but with the consent of the other nations implicated. Imperialism, on the other hand, is concerned with the extension of a nation's power beyond its own borders: it is a policy of egoism, arrogance and the right of the stronger. Here, surely, is a distinction of terms which, if observed, would assist us greatly towards getting a clear idea of some of the problems of government with which the world is now in travail.

Unfortunately, many British writers do not like to use the word Imperialism in its proper sense because they are afraid that by doing so they will be condemning the British Empire in its finer and more democratic aspects. They naturally shrink from condemning that democratic system of free

nations which includes Canada, Australia and South Africa. A distinguishing name should be given to that part of the British Empire which is really self-governing. The British Empire is partly an empire and partly not an empire; and at present the virtues of the part which is not an empire are used by many good men to blind themselves to the vices of the part which is an empire. Bishops swallow the whole of the Empire at a gulp, as though it were as impossible for an empire as for an egg to be good only in parts. They see that Australia is free, and the freedom of Australia, instead of persuading them that Ireland ought also to be free, persuades them that Ireland actually is free. General Smuts has proposed to rename the British Empire the British Commonwealth. One might suggest as an amendment to this that the free parts of the British Empire—Great Britain, Canada, South Africa, Australia, etc.—should be differentiated from the rest under the name of the British Commonwealth. It would then become clear to the average simple man that Ireland, India and Egypt are not portions of the British Commonwealth but only of the British Empire. This would, I fancy, hasten the day when men would demand the conversion of the British Empire into the British Commonwealth —a vastly more important thing than its mere rebaptism. One may leave out of consideration for the moment the question of the government of barbarous races. In the meantime, what sane man can question that at least the borders of the Commonwealth should have been, before the Peace Conference, enlarged so as to include Ireland, with the implication that Ireland should be at liberty either to remain in it or to leave it, according as she preferred?

Mr A. E. Zimmern is a writer whose book, *The Greek Commonwealth*, it seems to me difficult to

over-praise. His book on current politics, *Nationality and Government*, on the other hand, is the outcome not merely of an ambiguous use of the word Nationalism but of a failure to understand the difference between Nationalism and Imperialism and between the one kind of British Empire and the other. Hence it is itself a failure, and can only be praised with great reservations. Mr Zimmern's prejudices are all in favour of the composite State as opposed to the nation-State; and, as a result, he is opposed to the principle of self-determination, on the one hand, and hesitant (to say the least of it) in regard to the League of Nations, on the other. He says many fine things incidentally, and is full of enthusiasm for Nationalism as a spiritual force. It is only as a political force that it unbalances him. Now, no one but a materialist will deny that the spirit of Nationalism is a greater thing than the politics of Nationalism. It is equally true that the spirit of Liberalism is greater than the politics of Liberalism. But, just as the spirit of Liberalism must attempt to express itself in politics, so must the spirit of Nationalism attempt to express itself in politics. It is a creative spirit, not a fad.

Spiritual Nationalism is desirable, according to Mr Zimmern, because it gives the Jew in England and the Croatian and Pole in America a necessary link with the past in a home-country of his own people. Here Mr Zimmern seems to me to be confusing Nationalism with racialism. Nationalism is not a matter of racial pride. The national line of cleavage is, in most modern nations, distinct from the racial line. A good Englishman of to-day may be of Saxon, Norman, Celtic or Iberian race. Sir Alfred Mond, I suppose, would describe himself as a member of the Jewish race and of the English nation. Mr Zimmern would probably argue from this that,

if a number of races can come to terms within the bounds of a single nation, it ought to be possible for a number of nations to come to terms within the bounds of a single State. And it manifestly is possible. No reasonable man can object to Mr Zimmern's ideal of a composite State except in so far as he denies the right of self-determination to the separate nations of which it is made up. The British Commonwealth portion of the British Empire is admired by Liberals in all countries chiefly because the nations which compose it enjoy the right of self-determination almost completely. If I remember aright, even so vehement an Imperialist as Mr Chamberlain agreed that if Australia or Canada wished to separate itself entirely from the Empire it could do so. The British Commonwealth part of the Empire is a voluntary union of free, self-determining nations, and is no argument in favour of a composite State based on the denial of the right of self-determination.

In order to make out a case against self-determination, indeed, Mr Zimmern has to ignore all the great national struggles for freedom against external rule and to take refuge in the ambiguous and irrelevant instance of the American Civil War. Lincoln did not, as Mr Zimmern thinks he did, wage war to resist the principle of national self-determination. He regarded the United States as the unit of American nationality. The Southern States were not a nation: they were only the minority within a nation. They proclaimed themselves a nation at the time, but that was merely a move in a political game. That they were not a nation was proved by the simple fact that they did not carry on the struggle for national independence after their defeat, as the Poles, the Irish and the Czechs have done. Nations are not capable of

sudden subsidence after this fashion. Hence, it seems to me absurd for Mr Zimmern to pretend that there is any precedent to be found with respect to the right of nations to self-determination in the instance of the United States.

I quite agree with Mr Zimmern that self-determination is "a poor and unhelpful substitute for the Christian doctrine of human brotherhood and for Lincoln's great formula of dedication." But who suggests treating it as a substitute for these things? Liberty is not a substitute for love, any more than a bottle of claret is a substitute for a pair of boots. Personally, I cannot see how the Christian doctrine of human brotherhood can be honestly held by anyone who is not willing to concede liberty and equality as well as fraternity to all other nations as well as his own.

I have, perhaps, over-emphasised the points in regard to which I think Mr Zimmern has gone astray. I feel, however, that Mr Zimmern is a Liberal who has made the mistake of sitting down at "The Round Table" and has learned there to think, not fundamentally, but Liberal-Imperially. He is an internationalist, but apparently he believes less in a League of Nations than in a number of quasi-Empire-States with good intentions and, no doubt, plenty of Home Rule. He thinks it was a calamity for Belgium to have become an independent nation, as though a Germany which did not shrink from challenging Russia, France and England would have shrunk from challenging a Confederation of the Netherlands!

"The two chief weaknesses of British Liberalism," says Mr Zimmern, "are ignorance and amiability." The weakness of Mr Zimmern's Liberalism, I should say, is his woolly and wavering use of words. Even where he writes of Liberalism, he uses the word in a

sense that makes practically every English-speaking man a Liberal. The war of American Independence, he says, "arose, not out of a conflict between Liberalism and its opposite, but out of the clash of two rival conceptions of freedom and corporate responsibility." Might not a Prussian professor explain the German invasion of Belgium in similar terms? To Mr Zimmern the late Lord Salisbury—"seen, as it were, from above"—is simply a Liberal of the Right. The English party system, he explains, "could not function at all unless both sides were prepared to accept, not simply the constitutional framework inside which their activities are carried on, but the moral ideas which created it and sustain it." But the party of Lord Salisbury, as was shown during the fight over the House of Lords and Home Rule, accept none of these things. They attempted to revive the Royal veto and to withdraw the right of financial supply from the representatives of the people, and they helped Sir Edward Carson to raise a private army to defeat the will of Parliament. If the party of Lord Salisbury did not behave like Prussian Junkers, it is not because they lacked the will but because they lacked the power. English Liberals would be ignorant and amiable indeed if they did not perceive that Prussianism is a disease of the human soul, which can no more than influenza be confined within the borders of a single nation. Liberalism has to fight Prussianism in England as in Germany. To form a coalition between the shade of George III. and the shade of George Washington and to call it Liberalism might be entertaining as a paradox; but seriously to do this seems to be a playing with words and a mockery of the ideals Washington fought to establish. I trust that when Mr Zimmern makes his next contribution to political literature he will, for his own sake, preface it with a

dictionary of political terms and take as his guide through the tangle of the world's problems something better than a half-and-half *a priori* Imperialism. Such a philosophy as his, I feel, is a stumbling-block in the way not only of the freedom of individual peoples but of the League of Nations.

II

Professor J. H. Morgan is another distinguished Liberal who approaches Home Rule in the spirit less of a determined Liberal than of a constitutional lawyer. As editor of an authoritative Liberal volume on Home Rule, *The New Irish Constitution*, he shows none of that eager faith in the democratic principle and in the Irish people which inspired Mr Erskine Childers's masterly political essay, *The Framework of Home Rule*. He sees, to be sure, as clearly as Mr Childers does, the folly of trying to make Home Rule fit into a Procrustean bed of doctrinaire Federalism. But with him this is a question of convenience rather than of freedom. He has no objection in principle to maiming the freedom of the Irish Parliament to suit the imagined convenience of the United Kingdom. He is inclined to regret, for instance, that under the Home Rule Bill the number of matters in regard to which the Irish Parliament would be forbidden to legislate "has not been enlarged." "It is highly desirable," he holds, "to avoid conflict of laws in the United Kingdom as far as possible." Therefore he is not content with seeing the Land Acts, Old Age Pensions Acts, National Insurance Acts and Labour Exchange Acts reserved for the control of the Imperial Parliament. He is anxious to keep an Imperial grip on the Companies Acts, the Bills of Exchange Acts and the Factory Acts as well. In regard to the last

of these, he complains that "Ireland may discriminate against England only less effectively by lowering the standard of the Factory Acts than by a tariff." In other words, Ireland is to be denied the liberty to manage her own industrial life, because she may conceivably abuse it. But cannot this argument be extended so as to tell against the grant of any measure of Home Rule whatever? If the English people are to give way to jealousy, not of what Ireland has done, is doing, or is most likely to do, but of what she might be imagined as doing, they will insensibly slide into one of those moods of national suspiciousness which have so often led strong empires to destroy both the liberties and the industries of weaker nations. Self-government, if it is worth granting at all, must, like every other great reform, come as an expression of confidence in human nature. If Ireland is to be kept in leading-strings for fear she may stumble, or, worse still, prefer the gutter to the high road, those who so keep her are much more likely to limit and hamper her power for good than her power for evil. The ideal of true Liberalism is to give Irish opinion and Irish character the freest possible scope in directing the course of Irish national life—to liberate the moral and material energies of the Irish people for the great work of national reconstruction.

"The doctrine of Mazzini," Professor Hobhouse observes, in the important volume Professor Morgan has edited, "that every nation had its own peculiar function to fulfil in the life of humanity, was not pure fancy." There is more light shed on the problem of Irish self-government in that single sentence than in the whole of Professor Morgan's able and—on constitutional points—instructive chapter. Professor Hobhouse has also done a service to Liberals in emphasising the old, but sometimes forgotten,

truth that "the primary object of political Liberalism is to found government on freedom," and in reminding them that freedom means a good deal more than the establishment of "a well-oiled representative machine." Freedom does not mean merely representation in a democratic assembly. If it meant nothing beyond that, then England could have no logical objection to being incorporated in the United States or in France, provided she were given her fair share of representatives in Congress or the Chamber of Deputies. But, obviously, freedom involves representation in an assembly that is not only democratic but national. The case might be briefly stated in this way: One's own representative institutions are representative; other people's representative institutions are not. But, if this is so, Unionists may fairly ask whether the principle we have laid down does not hold good in regard to Unionist Ulster in Ireland, as well as in regard to the position of Ireland as a whole in the United Kingdom. It certainly would do so if Ulster had ever claimed to be treated as a nation. But Ulster never has made this claim. So far, Ulster has had no separate history as Ireland has had a separate history. She has never felt the need of a native Parliament, as Ireland has done, in order to "fulfil her function" among the nations of the world. At her noblest, she has been on the side of the Irish nation in its struggle for liberty, and she has invariably shared in the fruits of Irish national victories, such as the successive Land Acts. At her worst, she has allowed herself to be made the tool of an ascendancy faction —a sort of Irish Opposition which claims to rule Ireland permanently through Westminster. Thus the demand of Unionist Ulster is not a demand for freedom; it is a demand for the right to keep Ireland in subjection—or at least for the continuance

of a state of affairs which involves the subjection of Ireland. It is a demand begotten of sectarian fears, of ignorance of Irish history and ignorance of the world's history. Unionist Ulster has never affirmed a single positive ideal. She has simply repeated "No!" a thousand times in a hundred thousand voices.

So much for the Liberal attitude to Irish Nationalism and Ulster Unionism. But self-government is equally the logical outcome of the Liberal attitude to British representative institutions. No one but a political partisan could read Mr H. de R. Walker's article, *The Tendency towards Legislative Disintegration*, without realising the extent to which British representative institutions are imperilled by the postponement of Home Rule—perhaps, of Home Rule all round. In the first place, there is the eternal congestion of business, resulting in the constant application of the guillotine, and in the voting of huge sums of public money without discussion or criticism. "The Mother of Parliaments," as Mr Cecil Harmsworth says, writing on *The State of Parliamentary Business*, "is trying to do the work of four or five Parliaments, and is signally failing in the attempt." The facts brought forward by Mr Walker clearly show that the British Parliament is overburdened, because it attempts, not only to be a Parliament of the United Kingdom, but an English Parliament, a Scottish Parliament, an Irish Parliament, and a Welsh Parliament as well. Of the 1089 Public Acts which it passed in the twenty years 1891-1910, only 547 were applicable to the United Kingdom as a whole; the other 542 applied to certain "States" of the United Kingdom alone. These figures, it should be added, do not include the Local and Private Acts, the enumeration of which would make the case for devolution still

stronger. But, bad as the congestion of business is, it is not the worst feature of this imitation of a legislative union. Far worse is the fact that it introduces into the House of Commons more than a hundred members who, when they consent to attend, do not profess to represent the views of their constituents on any of the great political questions of the day, except the question of self-government. "Ireland," as Mr Walker says, "whether in its Nationalist or its Unionist constituencies, never expresses any other opinion than for or against Home Rule. . . . It is impossible to say, for instance, whether Ireland is in favour of Tariff Reform or not." Thus, on the fiscal question, and on many other questions, the Irish representatives are not representative; in other words, they are not responsible to, and do not express the opinion and wants of, their constituents. To this extent Parliamentary Government is injured. And British votes on Irish questions are as irresponsible and unrepresentative as are Irish votes on British questions. In the result, the tendency to "log-rolling" is strengthened, and the evils of "log-rolling" accentuated. The Unionists, who have themselves so often angled for the Irish vote, denounce it as a "corrupt bargain" when the Irish vote is cast for the Liberals. But, if there is any corruption in the business, it lies, not in the "bargain," but in the legislative union, of which the "bargain" is an inevitable consequence, and which Unionists, nevertheless, desire to perpetuate. It should be the task of Liberalism to free Great Britain and Parliamentary Government from all such political corrupting influences. The machine of government will otherwise suffer because the morals of government are neglected. Unfortunately, many Liberals are in danger of approaching Home Rule as a question of machinery and convenience,

instead of as a question involving large moral principles.

III

Sir Edward Carson declared in the course of his famous Ulster campaign: "I despise the will of the people; I care nothing for the opinion of the world, or for the Acts of the Legislature." Nothing, perhaps, has done so much to range the British workers on the side of Ireland as the spectacle of this elderly lawyer setting up in recent years as the Kaiser of Ulster and entering publicly, as *The Times* put it, into a sort of offensive and defensive alliance with the Deity. Sir Edward claimed the right to "break every law"; the Kaiser has claimed the same right. They both alike abandoned themselves to a political philosophy which, if put into practice, would make liberty, security and civilisation impossible. They both in their separate spheres played the part of world-wreckers, and it is difficult to see how they could more successfully have brought death and disaster on their fellow-men. If many Englishmen have come to long for a settlement with Ireland, it is not merely because they have grown weary of an old wrong but because they realise that Carsonism is but one phase of the monstrous lie against which the peoples of the West have been fighting. We know that while Sir Edward Carson has his way the world cannot, in the phrase of the hour, be made safe for democracy, since these islands will not have been made safe for democracy. Sir Edward, indeed, in the sentence I have quoted, frankly repudiated his loyalty either to the world or to the legislature of England. One of his followers, the Rev. T. L. F. Stack, was equally outspoken in the last year of the war about the attitude of the Carsonites to the British Empire. "So long as the Covenant stands,"

he declared, "our duty is to reject Home Rule, even if it proved the only salvation of the Empire." All these things might be dismissed as mere verbiage, the blind hysterics of the Anglo-Celt, were it not for the fact that during the war Sir Edward Carson and his politicians were as good as their word. Did not Sir Edward refuse to stand on the same platform with Mr Redmond at an all-Ireland recruiting meeting in Ulster? Did not the Ulster representatives refuse the extravagantly generous terms of settlement offered to them at the Convention, although Mr Lloyd George, as Prime Minister responsible for carrying on the war, assured them that "pressing war considerations" made a settlement an urgent necessity? "A settlement, in our judgment," he declared, "will materially help the successful conclusion of the war." Though the urgency of an Irish settlement is a hundredfold greater to-day than it was when the Prime Minister spoke those words, Sir Edward Carson remains indifferent to all appeals. He will not budge for the sake of the world. He will not budge for the sake of the British Empire. He will not budge for the sake of England. He will not budge for the sake of Ireland. He is disloyal, it seems to me, north, south, east and west. Not consciously disloyal, I regret to say. If he were conscious of his egoism and his errors, there would be some hope of his amendment. As there is apparently no hope of this, all that can be done is to refuse to allow him to play the part of a wrecker any longer, and to go forward with the work of settlement alike unaided and undeterred by the rhetoric of one to whom the will of the people and the opinion of the world are equal objects of contempt.

The chief danger to an Irish settlement at the present moment, however, seems to me to come not

from Sir Edward Carson but from what may be described as moderate Englishmen. Many of these are clear-sighted enough to see that, as one of the consequences of a war on behalf of the small nations, something must be done for Ireland; but they are tempted by their old pre-war prejudices to make that something as small as possible. They still believe in their hearts that the liberties of Ireland and the liberties of England are opposed. They are willing, reluctantly willing, to concede to Ireland the position of a province, like Quebec, or one analogous to that of a State in the United States of America. But they cannot bring themselves to think of Ireland as a nation, as even Mr Gladstone thought of it to some extent, and as Australians think of Australia. They regard Irish liberty as a sad necessity, not as a fine ideal. They are really bored by it: it is only when they consider how to safeguard England against its possible consequences that they grow interested. This, I contend, is a fatal spirit in which to approach the question of an Irish settlement. Nations, no more than individuals, can become friends on a basis of grudging distrust. To make Ireland a sort of ticket-of-leave man among the nations, watched with suspicion and put on its good behaviour, is more likely to result in friction than in friendship. And there is no reason why such a blunder should be made except the old foolish distrust of freedom which led statesmen in other days to dispute the rights of Americans and Canadians, of Parliaments and working-men, and, more recently, of women. George-the-Thirdism is one of the abiding characteristics of human nature. It was smashed in America. It was smashed in Canada. It was smashed only a year or two ago in South Africa. But it is still the spirit that governs Ireland. That, I fear, is the origin of a great deal

of the talk that is going on about federalism just now. The federalists are, for the most part, men who a few years ago were opposed to giving Ireland any Constitution at all. Now they are opposed to giving her any but a bad Constitution. Federalism, I am aware, is a word that may mean anything. The group of politicians which wishes to federate the British Empire, for instance, has no desire to deprive Canada, Australia and South Africa of the main liberties of self-respecting nations. Similarly, the German Empire is a federation of variously governed States. Those who demand a federalist solution of the Irish question, however—and I regret to see Mr George Barnes and Mr J. M. Robertson among the number—seem for the most part to be attempting to standardise a form of extended local government within the United Kingdom rather than aiming at satisfying the national aspirations of the Irish people, which differ from those of the Welsh and the Scottish peoples as cheese differs from chalk. Federalism, I fear, is regarded by the majority of its supporters—though not, perhaps, by Mr Barnes or Mr Robertson—not as a key to open the door to Irish liberty, but as a key to lock the door on Irish liberty. It is Unionism's second line of defence.

General Smuts, in one of the most important of his war speeches, uttered a warning against the attempt to impose a mechanical sameness of government on the nations composing the British Empire. Speaking at the banquet given in his honour by members of both Houses of Parliament, he said :

"What I feel in regard to all the empires of the past, and even in regard to the United States, is that the effort has always been towards forming one nation. All the empires we have known in the past and that exist to-day are founded on the idea of

assimilation, of trying to force human material into one mould. Your whole idea and basis is entirely different. You do not want to standardise the nations of the British Empire; you want to develop them towards greater, fuller nationality. These communities, the offspring of the Mother Country, or territories like my own, which have been annexed after the vicissitudes of war, must not be moulded on any one pattern. You want them to develop freely on the principles of self-government, and therefore your whole idea is different from anything that has ever existed before. That is the fundamental fact we have to bear in mind—that this British Commonwealth of nations does not stand for standardisation or denationalisation, but for the fuller, richer, and more various life of all the nations comprised in it."

That, I believe, expresses perfectly what South Africans, Canadians and Australians feel about the British Empire. It also explains, incidentally, why the British Empire, as regards all the white races of which it is composed except the Irish, has been a marvellous success. How then can any sane Imperialist desire to violate in Ireland those great principles which have saved Imperialism—though that is hardly the right name to call it by—in South Africa? The Irishman equally with the South African protests against standardisation and denationalisation. His whole history is a warning that he will never be a contented member of the British Empire, unless his country is an equal partner in (to repeat the words of General Smuts) "the fuller, richer, and more various life of all the nations comprised in it." It is possible even that he will never be a contented member of the British Empire at all.

From all the hints that have been published in the

Press, it may be inferred that the next Home Rule Bill will not be framed in the generous Commonwealth spirit of General Smuts. If it is not, it is doomed to failure both as an Imperial and as an Irish measure. If ever there was need for the generous as opposed to the niggardly view in politics, it is in Anglo-Irish politics to-day. Mr Erskine Childers, who in *The Framework of Home Rule* wrote by far the most remarkable book that has ever been written on the Home Rule question, has laid it down that the only secure principle on which an Irish Constitution can be framed is that "what is best for Ireland is best for the Empire." Certainly every rational Imperialist believes that what is best for Australia, or Canada, or South Africa is "best for the Empire." The unity of the British Empire, so far as regards all the white peoples who dwell within it except the Irish, is a unity of common interests and equal liberties. The Empire would not survive a fortnight if English statesmen behaved towards the Dominions in the same narrow, grudging, suspicious spirit in which they have almost consistently behaved towards Ireland. The Irish people were offered complete self-determination within the Empire when Mr Lloyd George set up the Convention. Having promised this, the Prime Minister unscrupulously withdrew his promise while the Convention was sitting and demanded that the members should not go beyond a federal scheme of Home Rule. This act of less than good faith, which passed without notice in Great Britain, had a disastrous effect in Ireland, turning into doubters many of those who were expecting great things from the Convention. And later the threat of Conscription and of a milk-and-water Home Rule Bill have created such a gulf between England and Ireland as has not existed before in modern times at an hour when it is of more vital importance

than ever before that the two countries should be friends, helping and not harrying one another, allies in the work of establishing human liberty. Alas! that statesmen should not have realised long ago that such a friendship and alliance was possible only on one condition. The Irish must be given the complete right of self-determination. They must be regarded as free not only by Englishmen but by themselves. The first step to this happy consummation would be to open an Irish Parliament, in accordance with the Home Rule Act already on the Statute-book, and to invite the Irish (including the Ulstermen) to set to work to model a Constitution for themselves. A subject Ireland can only be a source of political insanity and bitterness, a destructive and wasting influence on English as well as Irish politics, a peril (as Baron von Kühlmann's visit to Ulster and its consequences have made clear) in international affairs. The British statesman who, realising this, helps Ireland not only to he free but to feel free, will, by at once removing a menace and a nuisance, help to make liberty secure in these Western waters and will also, I believe, considerably hasten the victory of orderly progress and Liberal ideals throughout the world.

CHAPTER X

ONE MAN'S VIEWS ON DOMINION HOME RULE

"LIKE every other problem," a friend of mine, a lover of compromise, said to me, "the Irish problem is insoluble until a serious attempt is made to solve it. If it is the asses' bridge of British politics, this is because of the stubbornness of the asses, not because of the steepness of the bridge. I am not going to deny the existence of difficulties; I merely deny that they are insurmountable.

"There are a number of facts that must be clearly realised—and that do not seem to be generally realised—in England before a good peace can be made with Ireland. One rather startling fact is that it is the Imperialists who in the past have killed every attempt at an Imperial settlement of the Irish question. O'Connell, Butt, Parnell, Redmond—all in the name of the Irish people asked for freedom within the British Empire; and the Imperialists again and again replied: 'Certainly not. To belong to the British Empire is freedom enough for a small nation. However, though you are a member of the family, you are the black sheep of the family; so we are going to punish your insubordination with a Coercion Act.'

"The Imperialists always told themselves fondly that in Anglo-Irish politics it was a question of choosing between Home Rule and the Union. As a matter of fact, in Ireland—as in America and South Africa—the real alternative has always been

between a policy of Home Rule and a policy of separation. Unionism led straight to separation in the American colonies. In Ireland it has led, if not to separation, at least to the birth of the most powerful separatist movement that has been known in that country since the days of Cromwell. Liberty men must have, and liberty without the liberty to choose one's own form of government is merely a Cabinet Minister's joke. If you refuse a nation liberty inside an empire, it will demand liberty outside the empire. The most cursory dip into American history ought to make this clear even to Mr Austen Chamberlain.

"If this fact is grasped clearly by British statesmen of all parties, the greatest of the obstacles to an Irish settlement will have been removed. For the greatest obstacle in the past has always been, not that Ulster stood in the way of a settlement, but that British statesmen encouraged Ulster to stand in the way. This was due to various causes. It was due partly to a mistaken idea of patriotism which regarded the United Kingdom as being all one country. The Irish were admitted to be different when it became necessary to speak ill of them; but even then they did not enjoy the status of a different nation, but only of a different class—children, let us say, or criminals, or imbeciles, or beggars. Apart from the quasi-patriotic motive, the enemies of social reform were interested in preventing a settlement of the Irish problem, as they were anxious that the electorate should occupy its thoughts with Ireland rather than with questions of land, wages and hours of labour.

"Let us suppose, however, that the war has changed all this. Let us take for granted that it has taught even the most reactionary Englishman certain elementary truths about nationality and has opened

his eyes to the necessity, even if not the desirability, of social reconstruction. He has, on this assumption, no reason to wish ill to an Irish settlement, and every reason to wish well to it. What, then, should he urge a British Government to do? In view of the result of the last Convention, the suggestion may at first sight be regarded as a futile one; but it is my firm conviction that by far the best course for Mr Lloyd George would be to summon a new Convention. The method of conference, it may be said, has been tried, and failed. As a matter of fact the method of conference has not failed, since it has not been seriously tried. For one thing, the members of the last Convention were not directly chosen by the people. It was not an Irish Convention, but a Government Convention. No Convention consisting of delegates from sections of the community, County Council Chairmen and Government nominees will ever be in sufficiently vital contact with Irish passions and Irish realities to arrive at a satisfactory settlement. The late Irish Convention was, rightly or wrongly, regarded with suspicion by a majority of the Irish people. It was regarded as a piece of camouflage or window-dressing intended to deceive America into the belief that England had left the Irish question to be settled by Irishmen themselves, and to enable England to say to America, after the Convention had failed: 'Well, you see they have nobody but themselves to blame. They simply cannot come to an agreement.' This is a view that is possibly unfair to the mass of Englishmen, who are anxious to get the Irish difficulty out of the way. But the attitude of certain sections of the Unionist Press, and of Mr Bonar Law since the failure of the Convention, has done much to convince the most suspicious Sinn Feiners that their suspicions were justified. Anyhow, it is clear that, to have any

chance of success, an Irish Convention must, like Cæsar's wife, be above suspicion. Let it even begin to be suspected of being a 'Government dodge,' and it is doomed. The only Convention having the remotest chance of settling the Irish question would be a Convention consisting of the Members of Parliament returned at the last election. Let Mr Lloyd George summon such a conference of all the Irish representatives (Sinn Fein, Home Rule and Unionist), and leave it to them to thresh out their differences among themselves, on the understanding that the British Government accepts the principle of the right of every people to choose its own form of government.

"What, then, would be the lines discussion would be likely to follow at such a conference? First, of course, the Sinn Feiners would state their claim to an independent Irish republic. The Ulster Unionists would then state their claim to contract out of such a republic, and they would claim not merely the four Unionist counties of Ulster, but the Nationalist counties of Tyrone and Fermanagh as well. Both sides having the reputation of being irreconcilable, the business of the Conference would then seem to have reached an impasse. But not a bit of it. There are moderate men even among irreconcilables; and one of them would doubtless rise in order to put some pointed questions at this stage. He would say: 'Let us take for granted the right of every people to self-determination. Let us take for granted both the right of the Irish people and the right of the Ulster people to self-determination. How are we to reconcile these two rights? Can we do it in this way? Shall we grant complete independence of choice to the four Unionist counties of Ulster to cut themselves out of Ireland, and complete independence of choice to all the rest of Ireland, except the four

counties, to declare itself an independent republic? That seems to be the solution most in conformity with abstract reason. Will you accept it? And at once Ulstermen, Home Rulers and Sinn Feiners would roar out a unanimous 'No.'

"The Ulstermen would say: 'We want six, and we wont mix.' The Sinn Feiners and Home Rulers would cry out in horror at the proposal to divide their country, as the mother cried out when Solomon proposed to divide the living baby. At this the moderate man, instead of being disheartened, would feel his spirits rising. 'They told us,' he would say, 'that Irishmen can never agree among themselves, and yet here we have Ireland absolutely unanimous. The Sinn Feiner and the Orangeman, who were never united before, are united now in rejecting a policy of complete self-determination for their respective parts of Ireland.' And he would be so pleased with having united his fellow-countrymen that he would feel as though he had at least reached a hill-top on the way to the mountain-top.

"'Well, then,' he would continue, 'the Ulstermen negative an independent republic for all Ireland. The Sinn Feiners negative a republic for all Ireland minus the four counties. The Nationalists, as a whole, negative the exclusion of six Ulster counties. Let us see whether—complete self-determination having failed to produce a satisfactory settlement—some modified form of self-determination will serve us any better.' And, turning to the Sinn Feiners, he would ask: 'Would you rather have an independent republic for all Ireland minus the four counties or a dominion Constitution for the whole of Ireland inside the British Empire? The Sinn Fein reply would undoubtedly be: 'We want a republican Constitution for the whole of Ireland.' 'Quite so,' our moderate man would agree; 'but don't you see that, until you

convert Ulster to your point of view, that is impossible? Convert Ulster, and you can agree with her to have any form of government you please. Meanwhile, kindly answer my question. Which of the two alternatives I have mentioned would you prefer? Which, at any rate, would you hate the less?' And it is beyond the shadow of a doubt that nineteen Sinn Feiners out of twenty would confess their preference for a dominion Constitution for all Ireland to even the most republican and separatist Constitution that involved partition.

"Having thus persuaded the Sinn Feiners to state, not only their ideal solution, but their second-best solution, our Socratically-minded man would approach the Ulstermen with similar questions. He would find it a difficult matter to get an answer out of them. But I think he would find in the end that, rather than lose Tyrone and Fermanagh, the Ulstermen would even agree to accept an autonomous Ulster State of six counties within an Irish dominion —an autonomous Ulster State that, if it pleased, could have its own education laws, and drink laws, and marriage laws. Ulstermen would find that, provided they conceded the principle of the unity of Ireland, no one wished to stand in the way of their enjoyment of full liberty and self-government.

"If they merely continued to say 'No' to every offer, on the other hand, and refused to discuss any second-best solution, their aforetime English supporters would then warn them to make terms while it was still possible, as there can never be any more support in England for an intransigent Ulster. Conservative statesmen, indeed, would tell them frankly that, if Ireland was going to accept the British Empire for the sake of Ulster, Ulster was expected to accept Ireland for the sake of the British Empire. They would add a hint as to the possibility of an English

Government coming into power some day which would settle the Irish question over the heads of the Ulstermen. Such a settlement would not involve, of course, the armed coercion of Ulster, but it might conceivably involve the closing of English ports to Ulster goods and the withdrawal to the British Post Office from Ulster as a means of persuading it to 'transact.' When once Ulster saw that it would pay her to come to terms with the rest of Ireland, and that she could get far more generous terms from Ireland than she could hope to get from an exasperated British democracy, the chances are that she would at least be willing to try the experiment of coming into an Irish Constitution as an autonomous State for a term of years, reserving the right at the end of such a term to lay her case before the League of Nations, should the experiment prove unsatisfactory.

"Such a consummation is possible, however, only if the Convention I suggest is left absolutely free. The terms of reference of the last Convention were such that no Sinn Feiner could sit on it; and Mr Lloyd George suddenly modified them and made them still more unacceptable while the Convention was sitting. The new Convention should simply be a conference to discuss the future of Ireland. It would be impossible to make the terms of reference much more definite without alienating either the Ulstermen or the Sinn Feiners. It ought, I think, however, to have power to co-opt a score or more of members from the outside. It might reasonably wish to have the assistance and advice of Sir Horace Plunkett, or Mr G. W. Russell, or Mr Dillon, or some representative farmer or business man from Ulster. It would be no harm, either, I think, if it held its sittings in Belfast. The South would willingly go to the North in order to win it to the

principle of a united Ireland. The alternative to such a conference as I propose is a forcible settlement of the Irish question by English statesmen which will produce chaos both in Irish and British politics. The plan I have outlined will, I believe, produce peace in Ireland, prosperity in Ulster, and credit for British statesmanship. It depends, however, on the whole-heartedness with which the former British supporters of Ulster recognise that it takes two to make a compromise, and that no satisfactory solution is possible which does not give the essentials of self-determination to Ireland as a whole equally with Ulster. I have always been firmly convinced of the persuadability of Ulster, if only her English friends had the will to persuade her."

"But you will agree," said I to my friend, as he was about to rise, "that whether Ireland is to become a republic or a dominion like Canada should be left entirely to the Irish people themselves to decide."

"Certainly," he agreed. "England has no more right to interfere in the internal affairs of Ireland than in those of France. I am merely suggesting a form of evacuation that will save the faces of all creeds and classes!"

CHAPTER XI

THE IRISH SOLDIER

ENGLISHMEN have grown so accustomed to the part played by the Irish regiments in the modern history of the British army that they have not quite realised the amazing fact that the war with Germany was the first war in history in which the Irish soldier fought *quâ* Irishman on the same side as England. If one were writing the military history of the Irish people, one would have to describe a great many more battles in which the Irish fought against the English than those in which they have fought side by side with them. First, they fought for the independence of their country in Ireland itself: when this was no longer possible, after the triumph of King William III., they continued to fight against England in any country which would accept their services. The Wild Geese, as they were called, who sailed away with Sarsfield from the ruins of Limerick were perhaps the most noted and the most romantic soldiers of fortune who fought over the European battle-fields of the eighteenth century. They distinguished themselves in France, in Spain, in Italy and in Austria, and their fame is the best, if the most barren, part of their country's history during that time. If the Irish in Ireland thrilled in those days at the names of Blenheim, Ramillies, Cremona, Landen and Fontenoy, it was because of the deeds accomplished there by Irishmen in the armies of European monarchs. Not that all Irish-

men fought on the same side. After the Williamites had taken Limerick at the close of a resistance of splendid memories—Limerick, which James's French allies had assured him could not withstand a bombardment with roasted apples—the Irish regiments were marched up to a banner with the instruction that those who were willing to enter the English army should at that point wheel to the right, while those who preferred to sail away into exile should wheel in the opposite direction. The great majority of the soldiers preferred exile to submission, but a number of them went under the English colours, with the result that practically every war in which England was engaged through the eighteenth century was a civil war so far as the Irish were concerned. But the soldiers who fought for France and the other European countries felt that they were fighting for Ireland as the soldiers in the service of England did not. The latter were the real soldiers of fortune. The others were conscious, at least, of a sort of second-best patriotism. Sarsfield, when he was lying fatally wounded on the field of Landen, cried, as previously related: "O that this were for Ireland!"—a cry which has remained in the Irish imagination as the dying words, real or supposed, of Nelson and Pitt have remained in the English imagination. But none the less, it was not without bitterness that the Irish soldiers in the service of France found themselves fighting again and again against their countrymen in the English ranks. At Fontenoy, where the Irish soldiers turned the day against the English in such a way as to draw from George II. (unless the story is only a myth) the exclamation: "Cursed be the laws which deprive me of such subjects!" some of the soldiers in the Irish Brigade were found in tears after the battle. When they were asked why, having fought

so nobly, they were now melancholy, they replied that what they had done they would do again, but "it was hard they should have to fight against their own countrymen, some of them even relatives." "To divert attention, therefore, from this sad episode," said the Irishman who described it, "the band was ordered to play up *Patrick's Day*, when the men instantly started, shouted a 'Hurrah for old Ireland!' and were as alert and ready for a row as ever."

Nor does the broader-minded type of Englishman in those days seem to have resented the Irish practice of enlisting in the European armies. The Irish of the days of William and James were, as Macaulay says, detested as foreigners, but they were regarded apparently by many Englishmen as having, at least, the rights of foreigners. The great Anglo-Irishman, Swift, wrote to the Chevalier Wogan, famous for his squiring of the Princess Maria Clementina: "I cannot but highly esteem those gentlemen of Ireland who, with all the disadvantages of being exiles and strangers, have been able to distinguish themselves, by their valour and conduct, in so many parts of Europe, I think, above all other nations." So true-blue an English Tory as Dr Johnson enjoyed dining with the Irish Colonel Dromgold in Paris—"a very high man, sir, head of *L'École Militaire*, a most complete character, for he had first been Professor of Rhetoric, and then became a soldier." This vindicator of the Irish at Fontenoy was also a friend of Burke, and he was praised by Lord Lyttelton in lines including the couplet:

> Tho' now thy valour, to thy country lost,
> Shines in the foremost ranks of Gallia's host.

These Irish exiles, indeed, fought with courtesy as well as with courage—like Colonel O'Mahony, as he

tried at Cremona to save the life of the Baron de Freiberg, who had sworn to "perish or crush the Irish." Freiberg, in the impetuosity of the charge, arrived in the ranks of the Irish, when O'Mahony, anxious to save the life of a brave enemy, rushed forward and caught his bridle, crying: "Good quarter for M. de Freiberg!" But we are told that the Austrian cried out in answer: "This is no day for clemency, only do your duty and I'll do mine!" and fought his way forward till he was shot. Thus the recent war was by no means the first in which Irish soldiers faced the Germans, and an Irish air survives to commemorate the event, called *The Day We Beat the Germans at Cremona.* And so the record goes on till the days of the French Revolution and Napoleon, under whose banner Wolfe Tone and Miles Byrne, and many another famous Irishman, enlisted themselves. It was the Duke of Wellington who said of Wolfe Tone that he had come near being as fatal an enemy to England as Hannibal had been to Rome.

It is important that this background of Irish history should be remembered by all who want to understand the spirit of the Irish soldier in the recent war. I do not wish unduly to romanticise him. One may admit that he entered the British army in some cases through hunger, in many as the cheapest form of emigration and adventure, and for a host of other muddled reasons. But, so far as the war is concerned, Irish soldiers fought consciously as Irish patriots in a way in which they never fought before. They did not echo Sarsfield's cry, "O that this were for Ireland!" They took the view that, in defeating the Germans as at Cremona, they actually *were* fighting for Ireland. The chaplain of an Irish regiment, writing after the first battle of Ypres, described a dying soldier whom he attended. "His

side was torn with shrapnel, and he lay in a pool of blood. After being attended to spiritually, he raised his hand and exclaimed: 'My life for old Ireland!'" Nor is this an isolated example of conscious Irish patriotism—patriotism which is always so much more self-conscious in tragic than in successful countries. It was not many weeks before the outbreak of the war that the Irish Guards were reprimanded for singing *God Save Ireland* as Mr Redmond passed the barracks in Birdcage Walk. But they sang the same song—a song celebrating the three Fenians who were hanged at Manchester in 1867—as they charged the Germans at Mons. No doubt, they varied their music with "Early doors, this way" and the other comic audacities of the battlefield. But the evidence of the national spirit of the Irish troops in crisis after crisis of the war, in addition to their gaiety, fidelity and daring, is overwhelming. One oddly rhetorical letter from the front from a corporal in the Irish Guards shows how a flamboyant national spirit can exist in the breast of an Irish soldier even alongside a flamboyant Imperialism:

"We are British soldiers, and proud of the name and proud to belong to the great British Empire, but in doing our duty for the glory and honour of the Empire we have always also in our minds to add, if we can, more lustre to the fair name of Erin. Our flag of green with the harp and shamrock and the words 'Erin Go Bragh' is now faded and torn, but still loved and cherished. Talking about that dear old flag, I shall endeavour to describe how at ——, when the fate of the day seemed to waver in the balance, when the ruthless enemy by sheer weight of numbers was pressing onward at every point of vantage, that faded flag turned a threatened defeat

into decisive victory. On our left were the Munsters, on our right the Leinsters and Connaught Rangers. All were hard pressed, and were about to retire, when suddenly from the firing line one of our comrades rushed out flourishing the old green flag and shouting: 'Erin Go Bragh.' With the blood coursing fast through my veins, I watched with pride and admiration the marvellous effect produced by these simple words. With a mighty cheer that seemed to rend the heavens, and that rose and swelled even above the din of battle, those hard-pressed sons of Erin charged down on the advancing enemy with fixed bayonets. The Germans were completely staggered by this unexpected turn of events when victory seemed just within their grasp, but they were given little time for hesitation, for, to slightly alter the words of a well-known Irish ballad:

> Like lions leaping at a fold,
> When mad with hunger's pang,
> Right up against the German lines
> Those Irish heroes sprang.

The Germans turned and fled in all directions, completely routed and wholly disorganised. Such was the effect on the Irish Guards of the sight of their old green flag and the cry of 'Erin Go Bragh.'"

This letter, which I quote from Mr James Milne's admirable compilation, *The War Stories of Private Thomas Atkins*, is on a level with a letter published from an Irish sergeant, a prisoner in Germany, describing the failure of the German attempt to persuade the Irish prisoners to enlist in a special Irish brigade. He said that his men in reply sang first *God Save the King*, and then *A Nation Once Again*—another national song recalling the Sarsfields and the heroes of the Irish.

Of the courage of the Irish troops both in Gallipoli and in Flanders, though Mr Redmond justly complained that it was insufficiently recognised at headquarters, it is almost superfluous to speak. Not that it was more remarkable than English or French or Scottish or German courage. But the courage of the various nations is probably different in kind. Mr Valentine Williams, in his book, *With Our Army in Flanders*, writes: "The British soldier's indifference to danger, while it is one of his finest qualities, is often the despair of his officers. The Irish regiments are the worst. Their recklessness is proverbial." And the daring of the Irish (10th) Division at Gallipoli was as notable. Captain Thornhill, of the New Zealand forces, bore witness to it in a letter to an Irishman:

"Your Irish fellows are the talk of the whole Army. To me the last few weeks have been one long nightmare. . . . But I must make you wise in regard to the doings of the Irish. Most of them, I believe, are 'freshies.' The Empire can do with a heap more 'freshies' of the Irish brand. Their landing at Suvla Bay was the greatest thing that you will ever read of in books by high-brows. Those who witnessed the advance will never forget it. Bullets and shrapnel rained on 'em, yet they never wavered. Officers got it here, there, everywhere, but the men never wavered. . . . God! the men were splendid. The way they took the hill (now called Dublin Hill) was the kind of thing that would make you pinch yourself to prove it wasn't a cheap wine aftermath. How they got there heaven only knows. As the land lay, climbing into hell on an aeroplane seemed an easier proposition than taking that hill."

One might go on for one page after another

quoting the evidence of soldiers' letters as to the spirit, at once patriotic, romantic and fearless, in which Irishmen played their part in the war. I pass from this, however, to the discussion of the part they actually did play.

CHAPTER XII

IRELAND'S RECORD IN THE WAR

IRELAND'S record in the war was, from the point of view of the Allies, magnificent. The magnificence of the Irish contribution to the cause of freedom was only less amazing than the flood of calumny and belittlement that has been consistently poured on it ever since August, 1914. Ireland made a greater voluntary contribution of men to the Allied forces than any other unfree nation in the world. That is the leading fact of the situation. Sir Charles Russell, speaking at a Red Cross meeting at Dublin, declared that Ireland had given 250,000 men to the British army and navy; and this leaves altogether out of account the equally large number of Irishmen who took part in the war in the Australian, Canadian and American armies. If these are added in, we need not hesitate to accept Mr John Redmond's estimate that 500,000 Irishmen fought in the ranks of the Allies for the liberty of the world. At the same time Ireland was second only to America itself in the supplies of food she sent to England during the perilous years of the war. Had it not been for the assistance rendered by Ireland, both in men and food-stuffs, it is doubtful whether the Allies would have been able to force Germany to submission so soon. This is not to claim that Ireland did more in proportion than any other country. It is to claim merely that she was a necessary link in the great chain of the Allied success. He would be a knave

and a fool who would attempt to disparage the sacrifices of France and England, of tortured Belgium and tortured Serbia. He would be equally a knave and fool, however, who, having accepted the services of half-a-million Irish soldiers and sailors, would pretend that Ireland did not make an immense and unforeseeable contribution to the victory of the Allies, and who would reward the Irish dead with a weak sneer about the abundance of butter in Ireland in war time.

It may be asked why, these things being so, has the average Englishman been allowed to get the idea that Ireland stood aside and sulked during the war. Some people think that the insurrection of 1916 is chiefly to blame. Well, there were not enough Irishmen in the Dublin insurrection of 1916 to make up even one battalion of the Irish Guards. One was told at the time that the Dublin insurgents numbered about a thousand. One has learned since then that they were hardly more than six hundred. Clearly, if Ireland's freedom is to depend upon whether her services to the Allies have outweighed her disservices, she has earned her freedom about a thousand times over. For every Irishman who shouldered a rifle on the insurgent side, nearly a thousand Irishmen bore weapons on the side of the Allies. I doubt if one Englishman in a hundred thousand realises this. If they did, they would insist on seeing that their Irish allies had a free Parliament restored to them. Never was the need for a national government proved more completely. Had Ireland possessed a national government during the war, she would have had an organ for making known her services to the civilised world. Canada, Australia and South Africa have but to speak of what they have done, and all the world listens. *The Times*, and the Press in general, pay deference to

them as free nations that command respect. South Africa has not contributed nearly so many men to the Allied armies as Ireland has done, but, luckily for herself, South Africa is free, and even her most malignant enemy of the old days dares not criticise her gift. She too, like Ireland, had a small insurrection; but, even after this, she escaped calumny. She too has been divided in opinion as to the war —far more so, indeed, than Ireland was before the malevolence of the anti-Irish authorities had had time to destroy the people's enthusiasm for Belgium. "It is an unfortunate fact," said Mr Merriman in the early part of 1918, "that we in South Africa are for our sins riven into two factions of almost equal strength. Almost one-half of the European population is coldly neutral towards the issue which we look upon as vital, if, indeed, they are not positively hostile to the cause of the Allies." And yet South Africa is free. If there is any coldness towards the Allies, it is on account of past wrongs. In Ireland, on the other hand, if there is any coldness towards the Allies, it is chiefly on account of present wrongs. Some months ago, when a dinner was given in honour of Mr Burton, the Minister of Mines in South Africa, Mr Asquith in a speech mentioned the numbers of the South African forces who had served in the war. *The Times*, for some reason or other, omitted the figures in its report. One wondered at the time whether this was because they made Ireland's contribution seem so immense by comparison. *The Times* was content to give the report of the dinner some general appreciative heading such as "Loyal South Africa." It is more exigent in regard to Ireland. English statesmen, it is clear, have also one standard for South Africa and another for Ireland. Mr Burton, we are told, related to the assembled guests the story of a wounded Boer

soldier who said that he wished to get to France in order to repay the gift of free institutions to his country. He went on to say that the soldier's eye brightened as he added: "I would not have raised one single hand for the Empire if the Empire had refused to establish in my country that freedom which South Africa now enjoys." It is said that Mr Austen Chamberlain and other representative statesmen who were present cheered this remarkable saying of the Boer soldier. By what fatality is it that they are unable to see that Irishmen are human beings, with the same passions as Boers? General Botha wrote to Mr Redmond to say that he agreed with him that South Africa's services to the Allies were simply the fruit of the concession of national freedom. Yet, even without national freedom, and as a pure act of faith, Ireland poured her sons into the trenches in the most critical days of the war and helped to hold the line at its weakest for what then seemed to be the world's freedom.

Let me say again that I do not make these comparisons in order to belittle the services of any other nation, but only to show up Ireland's services in the war in a true light. Most of the free nations have published a list of their dead and wounded soldiers. Let us have a full list of the dead and wounded Irish soldiers, so that we may judge how great have been the sacrifices made by Ireland. Has Japan contributed as many dead as Ireland? She has not. Yet Japan is praised. Has New Zealand contributed as many? She has not. Yet New Zealand is praised. Has South Africa? Has Canada? Canada has a greater population than Ireland. Yet, if figures were to be had, I am confident it could be shown that far fewer Canadian-born men than Irish-born men have fallen in the war. Captain Esmonde, M.P., said in the House of Commons: "I have seen

myself, buried in one grave, 400 Nationalist soldiers killed in one fight"—two-thirds as many as the total number of the Dublin insurgents of Easter week. And that mournful spectacle was being repeated not after one fight, but after fifty during the war. In the most desperate days of the war—at Mons and at the Marne—Irishmen were present at the thickest of the fighting, and battalion after battalion gave itself up to the slaughter, singing *The Bold Fenian Men*, *A Nation Once Again*, and other songs of the kind that the police nowadays suppress with baton charges in Ireland. At the beginning of the war a battalion of the Irish Guards mutinied. It was because it had been rumoured that they were not being sent to the Front. The Irish Guards, it will be remembered, had been reprimanded at the time of the Buckingham Palace Conference for cheering Mr Redmond on his way down Birdcage Walk. I knew a soldier in the Irish Guards—now dead—who declared that his battalion called themselves "Redmond's Own." Well, they are dead, and so are the Redmonds, and Sir Edward Carson and Mr Bonar Law have made the glorious sacrifice of surviving to perpetuate the subjection of Ireland. One is not surprised to hear of the Nationalist soldier back from the Front who said to Mr Dillon: "Mr Dillon, the worst of it is I know now that we are not fighting for liberty, for England is going to betray us." England, with the help of Labour, one hopes, is going to do nothing of the sort; but Mr Bonar Law, Mr Shortt and Mr Macpherson, so far as they are able, have already made the great betrayal. Anti-Irish influences have for the moment triumphed, and Ireland is held up to contempt as a sullen shirker to all the free nations of Europe.

Mr Lloyd George admitted, in the days following the insurrection, the malignity of the anti-Irish

influences that had been at work among the English official classes in the early days of the war. This malignity has been shown by nothing more clearly than by the nature of the anti-Irish propaganda carried on by propagandists in the United States. The misrepresentation of Ireland to the United States could not have been more vehement if Ireland had been fighting for the Germans instead of for the Allies. If an American soldier, going ashore in Ireland, got into a drunken row that ended in a fight, the incident was telegraphed to America as if it were an unprovoked assault on the American flag by Irish Nationalists. And what can be said of the egregious statements about Ireland made in Mr "Ian Hay's" propaganda book published in America and exposed by Mr Devlin in the House of Commons? Irishmen ask themselves whether an English Government that meant to deal honestly by Ireland would actually pay for the spread of anti-Irish feeling in America. It seemed to me at the beginning of the war that England was now about to take the attitude before the world: "Well, we have done wrong in the past; but we are now going to liberate the small nations of the world—Ireland among them." Instead of that, English propaganda, so far as it has related to Ireland, has largely been occupied with an attempt to show, not that England has at last admitted the justice of the cause of Ireland, but that, comparatively speaking, England's attitude to Ireland is satisfactory and just. Every other Allied country except Ireland has been glorified in pamphlet after pamphlet. Ireland alone has been maligned. One pamphlet was published to show that the English do not behave as badly in Ireland as the Germans in Poland. On grounds of this kind nearly any country might be denied its freedom. One can usually find some other country which,

in some respect or other, has suffered still worse things.

Here, then, is the plain truth about Ireland. Some powerful influences, which have always hated the thought of Irish freedom, have devoted themselves resolutely to the denigration of Ireland since the beginning of the war. Why, the story of the heroic deeds of the Irish regiments at Gallipoli was suppressed until Mr Redmond raised a storm about them, after the troops of every other nation had been given full credit. And to-day people who are praising the Czecho-Slovaks and the Poles—both of whom fought (under compulsion) against the Allies by the fifty thousand—are to be found denouncing the Irish, who contributed an immense and vitally necessary army to the cause of the Allies. One rejoices in the freedom that is coming to the Poles and the Bohemians. But Ireland, too, has some little claim on the attention of statesmen in these years of liberation. As she thinks of her dead, lying in a world of graves in Flanders, Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, she may well (adapting the lines of Mr Kipling) cry out, in the agony of her soul:

> If blood be the price of nationality,
> Good God, we ha' paid in full.

In this hour of the institution of the League of Nations, let not the great deeds of this little nation be forgotten.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SOLDIERS' SACRIFICE

ONE of the tragic possibilities of the war always was that the soldiers might sacrifice their lives for an ideal and that the politician might afterwards make use of their sacrifices to violate this ideal. It is impossible, I admit, to estimate the number of idealists who turned themselves into soldiers in the war against Germany, or even to be sure of the exact formula of their idealism. On one point, however, one feels confident; never in any previous war did so many of the soldiers consciously fight for ideal ends. These ends may, for the most part, be resolved into a single purpose—the substitution of generosity for greed, bullying and cruelty in the intercourse of nations. One might almost describe the chief object of the war, from the point of view of idealistic soldiers, to be the Christianisation of foreign policy. That, certainly, was the object for which Professor Kettle gave his life, though by "foreign policy" he would have understood something more than the term conveys to the average Englishman. He would have meant by it not only the policy of one independent nation towards another but the policy of a dominant nation towards the nations subject to it. His demand was not merely that Germany should behave finely to Belgium, but that England should behave finely to Ireland; it was even that Ireland should behave finely to England. Though the last man in the world one could mistake for a Utopian,

he deliberately went out to the trenches in order to help to lay the foundations of a new world. "I want to live . . .," he wrote home from France, "to use all my powers of thinking, writing and working to drive out of civilisation this foul thing called War, and to put in its place understanding and comradeship." On another occasion he wrote: "If God spares me, I shall accept it as a special mission to preach love and peace for the rest of my life." And in almost his last letter he put his passionate faith in two deadly sentences: "Unless you hate war, as such, you cannot really hate Prussia. If you admit war as an essential part of civilisation, then what you are hating is merely Prussian efficiency."

Some people may think that these sentiments would be more in place in the mouth of a Conscientious Objector than of a soldier—a soldier, moreover, who was not a pressed man, but a volunteer. Kettle knew that his position was paradoxical. "We are gripped," he wrote, in *The Ways of War*, "in the ancient bloodiness of that paradox which bids us kill life in order to save life." He did not believe, like a militarist, in war; but he believed, like many a pacifist, in the last war. The militarist is a man who believes in war if it may be; the pacifist is a man who believes in war if it must be. Not that Kettle, or any other pacifist, could ever accept the theory that war is, at any time, an inevitable occurrence.

"There is" (he wrote) "a sort of pietism, hardly distinguishable from atheism, to which war appears as a sort of natural calamity. . . . War is not a calamity of nature, and there are no 'inevitable wars.' Or, rather, the only war inevitable is a war against aggression, and aggression itself is never inevitable."

Certainly, nothing but the necessity of protesting against aggression at all costs could ever have turned Kettle into a soldier in the British army. England has for seven centuries governed Ireland by the sword. Hence Irish Nationalists have always regarded the army as an instrument of English domination over their country, and therefore as no place for a patriotic Irishman. Kettle, as a student in Dublin, had distributed anti-recruiting leaflets in the streets. On entering politics, he tried to persuade Mr Redmond to include anti-enlistment in the programme of the Irish Party. He was considered at that time to be more in sympathy with Sinn Fein than any other of Mr Redmond's followers. And, if he died in the uniform of a British soldier, it was not that he had cast off his inherited Nationalism. Just as it was his Nationalism which had made him all his life protest against English aggression in Ireland, so it was his Nationalism which made him protest against German aggression in Belgium. He was quite free from the sort of Nationalism which is simply self-absorption applied to one's country. His Nationalism was international. He could not content himself with catch-words, such as "England is the enemy," "Germany is the enemy," or "Basutoland is the enemy." He saw that, though any of these statements may be true for a time, none of them is true for all time. They are not philosophic or universal truths. They may sound impressive enough at the street-corner or in a leading article. But men do not die for such things. At least, philosophers do not. It was the philosophic basis of Kettle's Nationalism which enabled him to see at the beginning of the present war that the principles in which he believed were most terribly threatened, not by England but by Germany. In July, 1914, he was in Belgium buying rifles for his

fellow-Nationalists. In August he took the view that the battle-field of Nationalism was transferred from the Liffey to Belgium, and the change of scene did not mean for him a change of ideal. As Mrs Kettle says : " It was as an Irish soldier in the army of Europe and civilisation that he entered the war."

Major Redmond's was a less subtle and philosophic nature than Kettle's. He was the incarnation, not of philosophic " good Europeanism " but of impulsive chivalry. His widow relates that he took the war so deeply to heart that for a long time he refused even to look at a newspaper. " If I'm too old to fight," he said, " at least I will not sit comfortably in an arm-chair and read what other men are doing and suffering." After the first Zeppelin raid, he decided he could remain a non-combatant no longer. Although in his fifties and by no means robust in health, he applied for a commission in the army. " I am far too old to be a soldier," he said, " but I mean to do my best for whatever life remains in me to show that Ireland at least is true to her treaties, and not in any way ungrateful to her friends throughout the world." As a friend has written of him : " To one of his political principles the donning of the British uniform was a moral effort." To fight for one's country is noble ; to fight for the oppressor of one's country is surely nobleness in its most difficult form. Both Redmond and Kettle, of course, believed that in fighting for England in the war they were fighting for Ireland. But, with Dublin Castle still in power and still as brutally cynical as ever, this was by no means self-evident. It required not only a fine moral sense, but a generous imagination to realise it. Even after they had thrown themselves heart and soul into the war, there was much that happened which must have tried their faith. Who but a politician can ever forget that last speech of

Major Redmond's in the House of Commons, which was like a hero's dying cry of despair? Speaking on a motion to put the Home Rule Act into immediate operation, he exclaimed, almost in an agony of emotion: "In God's name, why cannot you do it?" It was an appeal, one would have thought, that would move even a Cabinet Minister. Major Redmond had not been in his grave three months, however, when Sir Edward Carson was sending telegrams to the Australian Orangemen, encouraging them to continue the fight against Irish freedom, and was publicly accepting as a gift a model of the yacht which had landed the fatal arms of the gun-runners at Larne, and so helped to precipitate Europe into war. Sir Edward Carson, it has often seemed to me, has a nature closely resembling the Kaiser's. Egoistic, theatrical in a tawdry way, with the sort of personal magnetism that is always sure of cheers and that makes men ready to follow him to the death in an unjust cause, hysterical, self-deceiving, a hero of clergymen—had the Kaiser been an Anglo-Irishman and Sir Edward Carson a German, I do not believe that the course of European history during the last three or four years would have been appreciably different. Sir Edward, like the Kaiser, owes some reparation to this tortured world.

Kettle dreaded the triumph of the Carsons, as we see in his writings, not only as regards Ireland but as regards the wholesale degradation of the objects of the war. In his essay, *Trade or Honour?* he made a protest of splendid eloquence against everything for which the Paris Resolutions stand. "An attempt is being made," he warns us, "to transform what began as a war for honour into a war for trade":

"Powerful intriguers of unbounded assurance are sedulous behind the backs of the fighting men,

scheming to run up new flags in the place of the old. The inscription 'Justice' is to be hauled down, and 'Markets' is to be hoisted in its stead. In pursuance of that new object the powerful innovators are ready to extend far beyond their natural term the torture and agony which are now the sole realities of Europe. They are willing, for the accomplishment of it, to ordain that the blood of better men shall drip indefinitely into the cistern of Gehenna. And since it is the followers and gamblers at home, and not the silent trench-fellows of death at the Front, that exercise most influence on national policy, it is to be feared that the former may prevail. Assuredly protest is a matter of obligation."

Later on in the same chapter, he puts the matter in a sentence:

"The New Army attested to die, if need be, for the public law of Europe: there was no mention of tariffs in the bond."

Kettle, it will be seen, was Liberal as well as Nationalist in his enthusiasms. But it was as an exponent of Nationalism that he earned his greatest fame. He was a natural orator in his writings as in his speech. No one but an orator could have written that rich passage in *The Open Secret of Ireland* which portrays Ireland as not a conquered nation, but a nation marching towards victory. How far it soars above the level of contemporary eloquence!

"Tears, as we read in Wordsworth, to human suffering are due. If there be anyone with tears at command, he may shed them, with great fitness and no profit at all, over the martyrdom of Ireland. But let him, at least if he values facts, think twice before

he goes on to apply to her that other line which speaks of human hopes defeated and overthrown. No other people in the world has held so staunchly to its inner vision; none other has, with such fiery patience, repelled the hostility of circumstances, and in the end reshaped them after the desire of her heart. Hats off to success, gentlemen! Your modern god may well be troubled at the sight of this enigmatic Ireland which at once despises him and tumbles his faithfullest worshippers in the sand of their own amphitheatre. Yet, so it is. The Confederate general, seeing victory suddenly snatched from his hands, and not for the first time, by Meagher's Brigade, exclaimed in immortal profanity: 'There comes that damned green flag again!' I have often commended that phrase to Englishmen as admirably expressive of the historical *rôle* and record of Ireland in British politics. The damned green flag flutters again in their eyes, and if they will but listen to the music that marches with it, they will find that the lamenting fifes are dominated wholly by the drums of victory."

There is the music of national faith in these sentences. It is for this faith that tens of thousands of Irish soldiers sacrificed their lives in the war against Germany.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ENGLISH IN IRELAND: A SCENE

IRELAND marched for many generations under the green flag. This became (despite Kettle) an emblem of defeat, however—even of humiliation, for the withholding of Home Rule affected the most moderate of Irishmen like the rebuff of a proffered handshake. Parnell always hated green as an unlucky colour. Whether it is or not, Ireland has apparently had enough of it. Her young men and women have in the past two years taken a new flag and a new national anthem. Their flag is now the orange-white-and-green tricolour, and their song is *The Soldiers' Song*.

Dublin Castle does not quite know what to do about it. There is a minority of exceptionally well-fed persons whose flag is the Union Jack and whose anthem is *God Save the King*, and these people heatedly call on Dublin Castle to preserve order. By preserving order they mean cracking the skull of anyone who sings *The Soldiers' Song* and precipitating bodies of policemen and soldiers, armed with bludgeons and bayonets, upon every little crowd that happens to raise the orange-white-and-green flag. It is difficult to distinguish this view of order from the theory of terrorism. The preservation of order means nothing to the partisan save a free hand for violence on one's own side.

Dublin Castle on the whole prefers to rule by threat rather than by deed. Liberty Hall, for

instance, the headquarters of the Irish Transport Workers' Union, is opposite a railway bridge which is guarded by armed sentries. Recently an iron structure has been raised above the parapet of the bridge with a machine gun emplacement and an arrangement of loopholes through which rifles could fire straight into the windows of the most important trade union in Ireland. So long as the rifles do not go off, however, it is possible for a casual visitor to Dublin on a sunny day to feel that this is the best of all possible worlds, with nothing to complain about but the noise of the trams. People do not walk along the streets in actual chains, nor are babes-in-arms transfixed on the points of bayonets by passing soldiers. In these respects, at least, life in contemporary Ireland bears a resemblance to life in the Golden Age.

When the Irish-American delegates arrived in Dublin last May, Dublin Castle stood aside at first. The delegates drove up to the Mansion House in taxis from which the orange-white-and-green tricolour was flying on the right hand and the stars-and-stripes on the left. Every evening, as they returned from their travels, they were met at the railway station by the same beflagged taxis, which would then proceed slowly through the streets, surrounded by a bodyguard, followed by a brass band playing *The Soldiers' Song*:

> Soldiers are we;
> Our lives are pledged to Ireland—

an army of Volunteers in civilian clothes, and a dense mass of sight-seers. This was all done in defiance of the law, which forbids processions, and an occasional Volunteer even risked court martial by appearing in uniform. It was important, however, to give the American delegates the impression that

they were on a visit to a free country; and so the law slept, and good order reigned. On the second evening a long file of policemen, the white metal of their helmets making them look like a musical-comedy chorus of Prussians in the darkness, marched quickly behind the crowd; but the next night there was not a policeman to be seen on the route of the procession, and half Dublin trooped after the Republican flags and the Republican tunes to the fashionable Unionist square where the delegates stayed. They cheered Republican speeches made from a balcony under a huge tricolour, and then went home as quietly as if they had been coming out of a Sunday school. On the Friday, again, the Dáil Éireann, as the Republican Parliament is called, met in the Round Room of the Mansion House, and once more the police stood aside, while Volunteers with white armlets discharged the duties assigned to policemen in ordinary free States. Everything seemed quiet to the point of dullness. I met one man who had just left the Mansion House, and he complained bitterly of the dullness of some of the speeches. I was all the more astonished on turning into Dawson Street between five and six o'clock to find cordons of huge policemen throwing themselves across the street and soldiers in trench helmets and full kit marching in columns towards the Mansion House, with a fleet of motor lorries (more crowded than the wooden horse of Troy) following, out of which other soldiers poured, carrying monstrous-looking machine guns. The police said that I could not pass; but on my protesting that I lived in Dawson Street, one of them said genially: "Well, go ahead, but if you're bluffing, you're done for; for you can't get out at the other end." As another company of soldiers swept up to the pavement, a lady at my side ran up to them and said: "Why

don't you fight for liberty in this country? Why don't you fight for liberty in this country?" She went up to a young officer in a trench helmet and passionately put the same question to him. He looked slightly taken aback, but replied with a smile: "My dear lady, I'm only a soldier obeying orders." By this time the throb of the motor lorries, the tramp of marching feet, and the click of bayonets being fixed filled the street with the preliminary din of war. No one knew what was happening. People said that the Republican Parliament was being suppressed on account of some inflammatory speeches. Others said that the public reception arranged by the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House for that evening had been prohibited. An officer came up to a group of people near me and said it was "only a demonstration." Whatever may have been the purpose of it all, the street was now held at each end by a cordon of policemen. A few yards behind this came a row of soldiers with fixed bayonets. A few yards behind this, again, came more soldiers with fixed bayonets. An armoured car with the nose of a gun projecting threateningly started every few minutes with a grunt and sailed up and down the street. Beyond the police and soldiers a crowd was now gathering and singing *The Soldiers' Song* and other seditious airs. As each song came to an end they cheered defiantly. At the end of one chorus the soldiers rattled their rifle butts derisively on the stones, but an officer called out angrily: "Stop that." Singing and cheering went on in this fashion, while the crowd increased; and every time the armoured car went off on its minatory prowl there was a voluminous boo. An old woman ran out of a house crying: "This is going to be worse than the rebellion." "Prussianism!" declared a little man with a rough moustache. "Here's Prussianism

for you!" Meanwhile tramcars were still allowed to pass along the street, each with a crowd of people standing on the roof, angry and amazed. A travelling musician who happened to be on one tram had his trumpet with him; and, as he passed through the soldiers, he raised it to his lips and blew a defiant *Come to the Cookhouse Door*—which set both soldiers and Republicans laughing.

An officer assured some people in a doorway that nothing was going to happen. He protested good-naturedly against a comparison an onlooker made between the British army in Ireland and the Germans in Belgium. "You surely don't think we're like the Huns?" he said. He declared that no English soldier had any but friendly feelings towards the Irish. "You know," he said, "you people often complain about Oliver Cromwell. But we dislike Oliver Cromwell as much as you do. After all, we got rid of him as soon as we could, didn't we?" During the evening another officer came up and expressed his bewilderment as to the cause of the trouble between the English and the Irish. I said to him that it all arose from England's incapacity to see that the Irish were a nation like the Poles and the Bohemians. "I hope not like the Poles," he said, with a distressed air. While he was speaking a tiny mouse, terrified by the continous singing, cheering and clamour, appeared in the street and rushed off down the gutter with its tail up. A soldier in heavy boots ran after it and attempted to trip it. He thrust at it with his bayonet, and it turned and fled across the street. Half-a-dozen other soldiers made at it with their bayonets, scuffling for it like men playing hockey, and laughing uproariously. As soon as the officer saw what they were doing, he curtly told them to stop; but the mouse lay dead on the stones. Strange that a man should find pleasure in bayoneting a mouse!

Suddenly the crowd ceased singing and began to cheer and wave arms rapturously, and a taxi flying the Sinn Fein colours was received into its bosom. Other cars and motors had already arrived, with people in evening dress waiting to be admitted to the Mansion House. A police inspector put up his hand and brought the Sinn Fein taxi to a halt. At first it seemed as if the crowd was eager to rush the taxi through the police and soldiers, but the American delegates got out and approached the police on foot. As the crowd behind them became more excited and urgent, some of the soldiers in the front rank raised their rifles into the air, and a shot rang out. Some people declare that only a "slap-bang" was discharged, but the rifles were certainly pointed skywards at the time, and the effect was that of a rifle shot. Some of the onlookers on the outskirts of the crowd ran backwards, but the crowd as a whole pressed forward, cheering angrily and singing *The Soldiers' Song* and shouting for the Republic. Officers, police and American delegates stood in the middle of the road arguing—and thousands of guests waited, wondering whether they were going to a war or a tea-party.

At last the Americans were passed through the police cordon amid yells of triumph; but as Mr de Valera and their other hosts were forbidden to accompany them, they returned to the side of the taxi. Then followed more arguments with military and police officers, the armoured car commanding the mouth of the street. After some time it was clear that the guests were to be allowed through. Out of the crowd a number of volunteer stewards appeared and passed like a rope round the edge of their followers. The soldiers drew up and unfixed their bayonets. The men with the machine guns tumbled out of the alley where they had been waiting

and scrambled into the motor lorries. They began to move off amid the boos of the crowd. To the crowd it had all the appearance of a flight. Soldiers and police withdrew, and the Sinn Fein colours drove through, a host of cheering men and women pouring after them, carrying the volunteer stewards before them like driftwood on a wave. What all the trouble had been about no one in the crowd knew; but there was not a child present who did not believe that Sinn Fein had routed the British army. Mr Macpherson explains that this imposing display of bayonet, machine gun and armoured car had for its object the arrest of a single Sinn Fein Member of Parliament. Whatever the object may have been, the result was merely to give the American visitors an unusually vivid spectacle of methods of terrorism in Ireland and to bring ridicule on the British army. The whole display might be described as an immense success for Sinn Fein. So generally was this felt that an officer expressed his belief to me the next day that the Sinn Feiners had deliberately planned it for the sake of the American visitors, and had played a hoax for this purpose on the Dublin police. It would be amusing to think so, but the comedy of Irish life is not, I am afraid, a comedy of "practical joking" Sinn Feiners, but a comedy of the stupidity of General Shaw and Mr Macpherson. Never was *The Soldiers' Song* played with greater gusto than by the band at the Lord Mayor's reception that evening. True, a mouse lay dead outside in Dawson Street. Otherwise there was no shadow cast on the festivities of the occasion.

CHAPTER XV

ANOTHER SCENE: THE DRUMS OF ULSTER

It must have been twelve or thirteem years since I had marched out with the Orangemen to celebrate the battle of the Boyne, or whatever it is, at a Twelfth of July demonstration. Then it was along the dusty road from Belfast to Lambeg that I went a pilgrim. On the eve of the war I saw the great procession among the hedges and hills of the south of County Down—not far from Kilkeel, the capital village, as you might call it, of the old kingdom of Mourne. A traveller in the country-side on the eve of the Twelfth might have wondered at the manner in which every white house-front seemed to be shining like the lamp of a wise virgin. He would have learned that the whitening and cleansing of the houses at the approach of the Twelfth is an inherited ritual in these parts. He would have noticed, too, with interest, the orange lily rising like a spirit of flame among the marigolds and pansies and poppies and roses by hundreds of Protestant doors. And at night, when the jackdaws had fallen down the chimneys into their nests and the very stillness had gone asleep, he would have heard the air suddenly invaded by a rout of thwackings—a leaping heels-over-head procession of clang and clatter, as though a race of traction engines dragging loads of loose and empty milk cans were taking place down stony roads. That was the voice of the drum. No shrillness of fife, no sweetness of flute, shared the night

with its arguments. It reigned as supreme as thunder while it lasted. In its rhythm, however, it was less like thunder than a cosmic clog-dance with the orchestra silent. There are some people, I believe, who can find no rhythm at all in drum music. In Belfast we used to interpret its measured utterance as: "There are no public-houses on the Lámbég Róad." Personally I have always been a lover of the drum. It seems to me to be, not an instrument of threatening and outrage, as so many hold, but an instrument of summoning to good company. Certainly in Kilkeel it has never had any left-handed significance. Here, and in the surrounding district, the population is almost equally divided between Protestants and Catholics, yet the drum has never been known to set them fighting together. They say that party fighting is as rare as poverty in the neighbourhood, and that poverty simply does not exist. Even if one demurs to this until one has had a satisfactory definition of poverty, one cannot question that here is a corner of Ulster which is as unlike the Ulster that the week-end correspondents of the London Unionist papers discover as paradise is unlike Dante's Inferno on the cinematograph.

Into this fishing village under the mountains the morning of the Twelfth came like the peace of God. Over the wide central street a single arch hung in greeting to the day. It was a rope of orange lilies mixed with red and blue flowers: a gold Bible with a crown planted on it swung from the middle, and on each side of this was a row of tiny blue, white and red pennons, point downwards, with a silver star hanging from nearly every point, while a little ladder, a cardboard King William on a white horse, a cross, a pair of compasses, and various other symbols, dangled as from a Christmas tree. It was as charming as a bridge of toys. There were no

other public decorations. The shops were all open as usual, but there was more than the usual sprinkling of sight-seers hanging about the doors. There was an unusual number of country girls out, too, dressed in the flower of the fashion, and of children in their Sabbath clothes. Here and there an orange-and-blue rosette hid a button-hole; here and there a full-blown Orangeman moved along the pavement, with his sash putting a hoop of colour round his blue Sunday coat. Orange lilies were worn, but not universally. Probably the Catholics of the town, as well as the Protestants, were in the streets to see the festival of banner and drum go by on its annual way. When I arrived at the chief cross-roads of the village the local Orange lodges had apparently already set out into the country to meet a number of outlying lodges and give them the company of their flags and music along part of the road. It is a charming office of hospitality the lodges pay to each other. Before long they came back, a dozen or so of them, towards the sea, a tumult of painted banners marching down the street, while the drummers lashed the big drums with a morning vigour. Every banner was a shouting picture, supported on each side by a man holding a pole, and with many proud little boys keeping it steady with long orange ribbons. One banner would represent King William waving a sword as he crossed the Boyne on a white horse; another would depict him as he received his wound on the same horse at the same battle; another showed a youthful Queen Victoria presenting a Holy Bible to a monkey-brown heathen king, and bore the motto: "The Secret of England's Greatness"; another had a picture of the boy David getting his pebbles ready in the stream; and there were plenty more of them, all with a coloured picture on each side. Each lodge had its

special banner, before which two men usually walked holding the charter of the lodge, framed like a picture for the world's eyes. Behind the banner came the band, often two lordly drums and a little fife, the latter scarcely more audible amid the noise than the cheep of a newly hatched canary. Here, I confess with sadness, I noticed none of the backward-dancing flute-players who so often precede the big drums in the Belfast demonstrations, and who, I am sure, with their shapes and their tunes come down in direct line from an old procession to the temple of some rustic pagan god. In Kilkeel, however, there was a no less picturesque youth who went before some of the bands and swung a heavy pole, with a Bible and gold crown on the end of it, in time with the music, and who every now and then would twist round sharp as a drum-tap, and march backwards, with neat little steps, holding the pole horizontally across the front line of the band, as though to command an ideal straight line of front. Then, having marshalled his whistling men into right lines, he would sweep round again, twirling his pole with the airs and graces, and would lead them pacing down the road, looking the picture of happiness in office under the scarlet plumes of his khaki-coloured hat. Other young men walked at the sides and ends of the lodges with gleaming pikes, called deacon-poles, and an occasional officer carried a polished wooden hammer in his hand. Four abreast or so, the rank and file of the procession ambled along, with their coloured sashes over their shoulders—sashes of orange, blue, purple and black, with borders here and there of green, and many of them embroidered with ladders and crowing cocks and coffins and keys and death's-heads and lambs, and all the rest of it, in gold thread. They walked past slowly and self-consciously, with little attempt

to keep step, some puffing cheerfully at pipes, old men and young, dark and red, with bronzed skins, many of them with the shy, serious, Irish face, most of them with the talent of good will in their eyes. One could not have beheld anything less like the army of rage and roaring, of bloody words and purposes, which we are sometimes asked to regard as inhabiting the Orange counties of Ulster. Here was more friendship than frenzy. No sooner had the procession filed into the town than it broke off once more along a country road to meet a second large contingent coming from Annalong. Pouring down the hilly road and out among the fields, with the fifes lilting out *The Orange Lily*, and another band following at a few yards' distance battering out that most Irish, if most Protestant, of songs, *The Boyne Water*, and an artillery of drums behind merging into that, the little army seemed to go forth on its mission with a mediæval gaiety and gorgeousness. Crude the art of the painters no doubt was, but the imagination was carried away as the green and the blue and the orange silks of the banners disappeared to music over the edge of a hill.

Probably it was about an hour before the procession got back from its second march of hospitality. When it returned it was headed by a brake, upon which sat the Worshipful Master of the Orangemen of the district, in a chimney-pot hat and a plush coat of many colours. Lean of face, lean and grizzled of beard, smiling, spectacled, he raised his hat on all sides like a monarch as he was borne through the town. The two grey horses which drew him had bunches of orange lilies at their ears, as had many of the horses in the cars which brought loads of country visitors in from every part. The procession was now twice as long as it had previously been, and the

drums swept it down the street at a livelier pace as it made towards the field of meeting with a host of cars and girls in white dresses following it. On the way to the field, an old stooping farmer with a boy's face and eyes gleaming with sociability under his grey brows, came over and talked to me. When I spoke about the district, he said: "Ay, this is one of the civilised parts of the country. The country isn't all like this, you know." He talked about the prosperity of the farmers, and the excellence of seaweed as manure for the potatoes, and told me that you could grow twenty tons of potatoes on an acre of land and sell them at more than £3 a ton. When I asked him who were to be the speakers at the day's demonstration, he said: "I don't know. Aw, I suppose it'll be some of the clergy. Some of the clergy's very good at the talking." It was an admirable example of the easy-going way in which the people of the country-side accepted the Twelfth and enjoyed it when it came.

Even when the procession had arrived in the field, no one seemed to be in a hurry to begin the oratory. First of all, the lodges laid down their drums and folded up their banners, and sat down in various corners of the field, while carts followed them with crates of lemonade-bottles and provisions. Each lodge provided its own lunch, and the wives and children of many of the Orangemen shared in the picnic, while a couple of ice-cream carts, fallen from heaven knows where, stood on the road and supplied the needs of the outside public. The fields around were empty of labourers; the only sound of work to be heard was that of an unseen man clipping a hedge. There was a sort of Sunday look about it all—a Sunday school excursion look—as you gazed round the demonstrators sprawling in the grass in their Sunday clothes, eating sandwiches and

smoking and talking without excitement. As the elders ate and talked, small boys would steal up to the drums, fascinated, and beat a tattoo on them, taking turns at the work. A beggar-woman, with red-rimmed eyes, slipped among the people, gently begging for her baby, until a sturdy, bearded man told her to go away home. "Go home yourself to your drunken wife," she shouted, turning on him venomously; "bejasus, go home and pay your debts." It was the only exciting incident of the day. Conspicuous among the moving crowd in the field was the figure of the Worshipfnl Master in his chimney-pot hat and his plush cloak, smoking a pipe, with no memory of his ceremonial garb. Boys in twos and threes wandered about bandying wit with girls in twos and threes. And so an hour, and an hour and a half, passed, and no orator had yet broken the peace of the shining cloudy day.

At long last, there was a general movement towards the wagonette, where a purple-and-orange bannerette and a Union Jack were flying. Several clergymen clambered into it beside the Worshipful Master, and, as I got near one of them was reading a prayer. This was followed by a chapter from the Bible, after which the Worshipful Master uprose in his red, gold and blue plush, and smilingly rejoiced in the fact that so many of us had gathered there to do honour to

> King William Three
> Of glorious memoree.

He said that that great meeting, the greatest he had ever seen in Mourne, showed that Orangeism was still strong in the ancient kingdom, "and perhaps some of you know," he added, with a beautiful irrelevance, "that the Mourne Mountains were made before the Alps, and Kilkeel dates from the fifth

century. It was called Kellkeel then, but the name has changed since." He then referred to various members who had died or emigrated during the year. "And now," was his comment on one of the former, as he pointed upwards, "our friend has joined the Grand Lodge above—I mean heaven." He read a letter from a member who had gone to New Zealand, promising, when the Ulster rebellion arrived, to come back. "You hear that," said the Worshipful Master, with a happy smile—"he says he'll come back when he's wanted." And he said it with so comic a simplicity that some of the listeners could not help bursting into laughter. It was a good-humoured, free-and-easy speech, an odd mixture of country-side colloquialisms and astonishing plunges into poetry and eloquence. He would suddenly break aside from the main thread of his speech and, with outstretched arms, appeal to us: "Put upon my tombstone when you lay me in the green earth neither 'He did well' nor 'He did ill,' but only 'He did his best.'" And with equal unexpectedness he afterwards declaimed a parody on *From Greenland's Icy Mountains*, which began something like:

> From Ulster's glorious mountains
> To Munster's golden sands,
> Where Connemara's fountains,

etc., and ended by saying that all the parts of Ireland mentioned were united together in declaring:

> We will not have Home Rule.

The next speaker was a young Presbyterian minister, who contented himself with covering the local history of the Orange Order during the year. After him came yet another young minister, who traced the history of Orangeism back to the end of the seventeenth century, and who incidentally spoke

the only speech of ill will that I heard during the day. He recalled the battle of the Diamond in Armagh, where the Orangemen had defeated a superior host of Catholics in 1795, "leaving forty-eight dead," he added, with apparent satisfaction. "And," he went on boastfully, "we're ready to meet our enemies again, three to one, when they like. Don't think we're afraid of their numbers," he declared. "I have seen them during the riots up there in Derry, and you would only have to shake an empty pair of breeches at them to see the whole lot of them taking to their heels." He declared that Sir Edward Carson was one of the brightest intellects in the House of Commons, and expressed the deepest resentment because some people sneered at him who weren't fit to black his shoes. "Bottle-washers," suggested one of the audience. "They sneer at our dummy rifles," cried the young clergyman; "we have the real rifles and can produce them when necessary." He kept repeating the word "loyalty," and contemptuously proclaimed that "a loyal Hibernian was as rare as holy water in Aughanoory Orange Lodge." He called for "the long arm and the short sword" to seek out and punish treason. He uttered no word of good will to the country in which he was born. Perhaps that is why his speech sounded so oddly in the tolerant atmosphere of Mourne—"kindly Mourne," as the old stooping farmer had assured me it is called. And I do not believe that the mind of the place was expressed in it. Beside it I could not help putting for contrast a sermon I heard in the Presbyterian Church the next morning, when a minister with white hairs preached a sermon that closed with another reference to Home Rule. He said that he, and many people with him, believed that Rome under Home Rule could re-establish her system as it was in the days of the Stuarts, and he urged his

hearers to pray to God to avert so great a calamity. "And if," he concluded—I quote the words freely from memory—"God sees good to answer our prayer, He will drive these clouds away, and if in His providence He should allow the changes we dread to come to pass, then we may be sure that it is His purpose to make them the means of some great blessing to His people of which we do not now know." That, I think, is the statement of a deeper Ulster mood than the clerical message that had been delivered on the field.

I left the meeting after the young minister had spoken. But in the evening the bands came thundering into the village again, and, as I watched them, I remembered how I too was once filled with the vision of the Pope as a dragon who might at any time come stealing over the hills during the night to devour us in our beds. Well, perhaps I am something of an Orangeman in my view of the Pope still. But I sometimes wonder whether the Orangeman dreads Home Rule because of the power it will give the Pope half as much as many a Pope has dreaded Irish freedom because of the power it will give the Orangeman.

CHAPTER XVI

THE WITNESS OF THE POETS

If one wants to know the truth about a country is it better to turn to the poets or the police? One always accepts the witness of the poets about one's own country. In regard to foreign countries (or, at least, foreign States) one wobbles, but with a distinct bias in favour of the police. In regard to subject countries one does not wobble at all: one takes the police view automatically. There have been individual Englishmen, even individual statesmen, who have seen Ireland more or less through the eyes of the poets. But they have never been able to establish the Ireland of the poets on the map of the world. Ireland is still, for all practical purposes—at least, for all political purposes—a nation in the dock. Her history is the long history of a people who entered into a criminal conspiracy to set their country free. They have been guilty of patriotism, self-sacrifice, fidelity, idealism, hatred of oppression, and all the other vices in the Newgate Calendar of the little nations. The poets, it may be, who are lenient to sinners, have praised Ireland for these things. The police, however, are not to be deluded into sentimentality. For them the supreme virtue of a subject people is obedience. The first and last commandment with them is: "Thou shalt obey the will of the stronger" as it is set forth in Act of Parliament or in the decree of Tsar, or Sultan, or dictator.

Had the police view prevailed the people of England would never have been free, George Washington would have been hanged as a criminal, and Italy would not now be a nation. That, whether we like it or not, is a fact that we must face. I am not among those who affect to despise law and order, and who believe that the world would get on very well without policemen standing at the street-corners. Law and order, however, are admirable only as a means to liberty and justice. As substitutes for liberty and justice they are not tolerable to any community of self-respecting men. From the policeman's point of view—perhaps inevitably so—the test of a nation's or a man's virtue is compliance with the existing law. The poets, on the other hand, who have as a rule been on the side of Christ against Caiaphas, are more exacting. They are the confessors of the soul. They ask about a man, not whether he broke a law, but whether he served God—about a nation, not whether it was orderly, but whether it kept the faith. And they not only ask but answer these questions. Theirs is the ultimate human verdict on men and on nations.

If would be an excellent thing if Lord French and the other soldiers and statesmen, in whose hands is to some extent the immediate destiny of Ireland, would study the reports of the poets as well as the reports of the police concerning the Irish people. They would learn a number of things from the poets. They would learn, for one thing, that Ireland is a nation, with a tradition, genius and self-consciousness distinct from those of any other nation in Europe. They need not go to the rebel poets to discover this. They will find the same flaming news in the poems of Irishmen who died fighting in the uniform of the British army. If we want the poetry of modern Irish Nationalism we get it as indubitably in the

work of Francis Ledwidge and Tom Kettle as in that of Thomas MacDonagh and Joseph Plunkett. It may be questioned, indeed, if the former is not on the whole the more poetic and, therefore, the more persuasive of the two. The fact that Kettle and Ledwidge threw themselves into the fight for the world's liberty did not mean that they had grown indifferent to Ireland's liberty. They gave their lives for Ireland none the less deliberately because they gave them for Europe. Living and dying in this great passion, they seem to have felt at times a curious kinship with those other Irish poets who perished as a result of the Easter week rising in 1916. They differed from them in regard to the war; one of them even took arms against them; but death is a great canoniser, and it was not long after the rebel poets were in their graves that Corporal Ledwidge was singing of them as companions in the great adventure for the liberation of Ireland. The death of the poets in the rebellion seems to have cast a tragic cloud over his imagination. In one of his poems in *Last Songs* he relates how:

> All the dead kings came to me
> At Rosnaree, where I was dreaming,

and told him the famous three sorrows of story-telling. He in his turn had a story to tell:

> And I, too, told the kings a story
> Of later glory, her fourth sorrow.

This was the sorrow of the martyrdoms of Easter Week. The end of the poem, "The Dead Kings," coming as it does from the pen of a soldier, since dead, is testimony that must be honoured as to the intensity of the passion that is stirring in Ireland to-day:

And one said: "Since the poets perished,
  And all they cherished in the way,
Their thoughts unsung, like petal showers,
  Inflame the hours of blue and grey."

And one said: "A loud tramp of men
  We'll hear again at Rosnaree."
A bomb burst near me where I lay,
  I woke, 'twas day in Picardy.

I do not quote this as an example of Ledwidge's poetry at its finest. I quote it simply as evidence of the nature of the thoughts of a pro-English (as distinguished from what is called a pro-German) Irishman regarding his country and his countrymen.

Many influences have been at work in recent years to impress upon the world at large the false opinion that the love of Ireland is a pro-German thing—that Irishmen desire freedom merely out of hatred of England. The truth is, the Irish are very like any other nation. They idealise their own country and are enraged with those who trample on them and play Pharaoh over their miseries. Francis Ledwidge seems to have been so happily constituted as to be spared the rage of patriotism, but he had his full share of its ardour. One of his poems, "At Currabwee," is a charming, fanciful and passionate expression of his love both for Ireland and for the lovers of Ireland, even when the latter died fighting in the opposite ranks to those in which he himself fought. He begins by recalling the stories that he used to hear of the leprechauns, the "little men with leather hats," who—

Mend the boots of Faery
From the tough wings of the bats

—stories that he had heard from his mother as a child. As he lets his memory wander, the old

country-tale is linked up with thoughts not only of his mother but of the dead poets of Easter Week:

Louder than a cricket's wing,
  All night long their hammer's glee
Times the merry songs they sing
  Of Ireland glorious and free.
So I heard Joseph Plunkett say—
You know he heard them but last May.

And when the night is very cold
  They warm their hands against the light
Of stars that make the waters gold
  Where they are labouring all the night.
So Pearse said, and he knew the truth—
Among the stars he spent his youth.

Ledwidge, however, does not idealise the poets of the insurrection at the expense of those other gallant Irishmen like himself, who, putting their trust in the honour of England and their lives into the struggle for the liberty of mankind, fought for Ireland on the battle-fields of Europe. The last verse of the poem is full of the proud consciousness that he too was giving his days to his country.

And I, myself, have often heard
  Their singing as the stars went by,
For am I not of those who reared
  The banner of old Ireland high,
From Dublin town to Turkey's shores,
And where the Vardar loudly roars?

Mr James Stephens is a writer of greater originality than Ledwidge. I do not propose to discuss the original side of his genius in this place. I turn to him here only as one of the many poet witnesses on behalf of Irish Nationalism. *Reincarnations*, his book of adaptations from the older Gaelic poets, is of especial interest in this connection. As evidence of the centuries-old passion with which the Irish have

regarded their country as a nation oppressed and denationalised by a foreign people, it contains much that is deeply impressive. The version of O'Rahilly's poem "Inis Fál," for instance, expresses what every Irish Nationalist still believes—that the Irish arts and the Irish social life, as well as Irish wealth and Irish lands, were stolen away or destroyed by the invaders:

> Now may we turn aside and dry our tears,
> And comfort us, and lay aside our fears,
> For all is gone—all comely quality,
> All gentleness and hospitality,
> All courtesy and merriment is gone;
> Our virtues all are withered every one,
> Our music vanished and our skill to sing:
> Now may we quiet us and quit our moan,
> Nothing is whole that could be broke, no thing
> Remains to us of all that was our own.

No one who does not understand the feeling expressed in these lines, that Ireland is a foreign country as regards England, and a country that has suffered loss as bitter and complete as Poland, is in a position to spell even the first simple words of the Irish question. The anti-Irish will, I do not doubt, continue to regard Irish national sentiment as an unpleasant mixture of whining and race hatred. It is always an easy thing to belittle the agony and tears of a subject people. But every honest Englishman of imagination knows that had the parts of England and Ireland been reversed, England's attitude to a dominant Ireland would have been the same that Ireland's attitude to a dominant England has always been.

I do not share the mood of Pearse when he writes that Irish hate of the English is "a scarcely less holy passion" than "Irish love of Nature and of Nature's God." Hatred is one of the ancient passions of human nature, but it is a deforming passion and

outside the circle of holy things. At the same time, it is an inevitable passion in certain circumstances for all but the saints, and the Irish would have been less than human if the attempts of Queen Elizabeth to exterminate them or of Cromwell to destroy them had not filled them with wild and ruinous thoughts. It was an anonymous Irishman of those old days who comforted himself with the thought:

> The world hath conquered, the wind hath scattered like dust
> Alexander, Cæsar, and all that shared their sway,
> Tara is grass, and behold how Troy lieth low,
> And even the English, perchance their hour will come!

That quatrain, translated by Pearse, is but a mild example of some of the rebel poetry which he himself gathered and put into English in *Songs of the Irish Rebels.* A still fiercer passion breaks through in his translation of Ferriter's poem on the Cromwellian clearances, which contains the verses:

> Pirates rule in the place of princes,
> In comfort, in ease, in luxury, in spacious palaces,
> Full of strength, full of goods, full of words, well-feasting,
> Uncouth, gabbling, greedy, cynical.
>
> The aim and desire of the crew is,
> However they may make peace with our people,
> To play with those that accept terms from them,
> The tricks of the redoubtable cat with the mouse!

On the whole, the words seem gentle and innocent compared with a speech of Sir Edward Carson or a leading article in *The Spectator* against the Irish Nationalists. *The Spectator's* attitude to Ireland, however, is as irrefragable a proof that Ireland is a separate nation as is Ireland's attitude to *The Spectator* and all for which it stands.

Sir Samuel Ferguson, a selection of whose poems can be got in "Every Irishman's Library," was a

Belfast man belonging to the Protestant and Unionist class. But in his work, as surely as in the work of the Southern Catholic, Pearse, we find unanswerable evidence that Ireland is a distinct and foreign nation. Mr Yeats in his youth declared that Ferguson was "the greatest poet Ireland produced, because the most central and the most Celtic." Most of us read him, however, less for his original work than for his translations from the Irish. Among the latter is "The Downfall of Gael," the original of which was written about 1580 by O'Gnive, Bard of the O'Neill. It is a fine example of national poetry both in its lamentation and its summons to action. It is too long to quote in full, but the last verses will give an idea of its anger, sorrow and power:

We starve by the board,
And we thirst amid wassail—
For the guest is the lord,
And the host is the vassal!

Through the woods let us roam,
Through the wastes wild and barren;
We are strangers at home!
We are exiles in Erin!

And Erin's a bark
O'er the wild waters driven!
And the tempest howls dark
And her side planks are riven!

And in billows of might
Swell the Saxon before her—
Unite, oh, unite!
Or the billows burst o'er her!

Had Serbian poets written verse like this, how the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London and Mr Lloyd George and *The Times* would have united to do honour to so noble a national bequest of passion and patriotism! A long national memory

seems in an ally the ultimate grace, but in a subject and suspect country the ultimate disgrace. That is why Ireland is misunderstood. She will be understood easily enough on the day on which statesmen make an honest effort to understand her. They can do this by studying Irish literature and Irish history, wherein the whole truth about Ireland is as clear as day. Lord French will learn far more about the essentials of what is called the Irish question from the verse of Ledwidge, Pearse and Lieutenant Kettle, and from Mrs Green's little book on *Irish Nationality*, than from Major Price, the Dublin Metropolitan Police and the Royal Irish Constabulary combined.

CHAPTER XVII

A NOTE ON IRISH LITERATURE

I

THE wealth of literature which Ireland has produced in Gaelic is as amazing almost as the poverty of the literature she had produced in English until last century. Her old books are, as scholars know, chiefly in prose. She possesses an Iliad of stories—the stories of Cuchullain, of Finn, of the children of Lir, of Diarmaid and Gráinne, of Deirdre and the sons of Uisneach—which have known no diminution of beauty in a thousand years. Even in Irish prose, however, we are usually aware of an underflow of lyricism. If every now and then the prose breaks into poetry like a mediæval cantefable, it is not an abrupt change from pedestrian to winged literature. Irish prose flashes into poetry hardly less naturally than the lark springs from the ground. A passionate delight in beauty, youth, nature, love and battle runs through Irish imaginative literature like a song; and though this delight is, in a sense, the stuff of which all literature is made, I believe that the intensity of the worship of nature, at least, which is shown in some of the medieval Irish poems is without a parallel in the literature of the Middle Ages, or, indeed, of any age between the writing of the Song of Solomon and the coming of Burns and Wordsworth.

Perhaps we are inclined to exaggerate the degree

to which Wordsworth and the nineteenth century discovered nature. Obviously, man's emotional concern with nature is as old as hunger or love or any other primary instinct. At the same time, it is only among some peoples and at some periods that the long procession of nature with its flying banners becomes the subject of enthusiasm without ulterior motive, of childlike rapture for rapture's sake. The nineteenth century was such a period. The Irish have for hundreds of years been such a people. The centuries-old joyousness of the Irish imagination in its attitude to nature appears in such a poem as *In Praise of May*, which Mr. T. W. Rolleston has translated into English rhyme. The poem is too long to quote in full; but, at the risk of spoiling it, I give some scattered verses:

May-day! delightful day!
Bright colours play the vale along.
Now wakes at morning's slender ray
Wild and gay the blackbird's song.

Now comes the bird of dusty hue,
The loud cuckoo, the summer-lover.
Branchy trees are thick with leaves.
The bitter evil time is over.

. . . . . .

Loaded bees with puny power
Goodly flower-harvest win;
Cattle roam with muddy flanks,
Busy ants go out and in.

. . . . . .

A bright shaft has smit the streams,
With gold gleams the water-flag;
Leaps the fish, and on the hills
Ardour thrills the leaping stag.

Loudly carols the lark on high,
Small and shy, his tireless lay,
Singing in wildest, merriest mood,
Delicate-hued, delightful May.

Those who think that Mr Rolleston has unduly amplified and modernised the original would do well to turn for purposes of comparison to the prose translation of the last verse of the poem from Dr Kuno Meyer's *Ancient Irish Poetry*:

> A timorous, tiny, persistent fellow
> Sings at the top of his voice,
> The lark sings clear tidings;
> Surpassing summer-time of delicate hues!

It is clear that the enthusiasm for this Noah's Ark which is the world is not the importation of a modern rhyming translator but is the very soul of the ninth-century Irish original.

This we may regard as an example of Irish secular, and even of pagan, poetry: it is traditionally ascribed to Finn MacCool. One of the remarkable facts in Irish literature is, however, as Miss Hull points out in her anthology, *The Poem Book of the Gael*, that there is no real break between the pagan and Christian poets of nature. Saint and hermit observed the phantasmagoria of bird and fish and flower with the same blitheness as the most godless bard. Irish mediæval Christianity seems, indeed, for the most part to have missed that bleak hatred of the world which hung so long like a pestilence over the greater part of Christian Europe. St Columba, in the poem, does not praise God by ignoring the sensible world around him: his thoughts turn easily from heaven to the delights of sitting on a rock by the sea:

> That I might hear the thunder of the clamorous waves
> Upon the rocks;
> That I might hear the roar by the side of the church
> Of the surrounding sea;
> That I might watch its noble bird-flocks
> Flying over the watery surf;
> That I might see the ocean-monsters,
> Greatest of all wonders.

Manchan, the hermit, describing that "hidden hut in the wilderness," which he desires, finds time to pray for

A southern aspect to catch the sun, a brook across the floor,
A choice land, rich with gracious gifts, down-stretching from my door.

Prince Marvan, who has retired from a palace to a hermitage in the woods, in praising his new life to his brother, King Guaire, speaks not as a mystic, but of the love of the beautiful and simple things which the eye can see. He has lover's eyes for the movements of the animals, the falling of the fruits, the colour and song of the birds about his dwelling.

Like a great hostel, welcoming to all,
My laden apple-tree;
Low in the hedge, the modest hazel-bush
Drops ripest nuts for me.

. . . . . .

The host of forest-dwellers of the soil
Trysting at night;
To meet them foxes come, a peaceful troop,
For my delight.

Like exiled princes, flocking to their home,
They gather round;
Beneath the river-bank great salmon leap,
And trout abound.

. . . . . .

The little music-makers of the world,
Chafers and bees,
Drone answer to the tumbling torrent's roar,
Beneath the trees.

It is, perhaps, less of a paradox than it at first sight appears that a people which has praised life with such sanity and such acceptance as in poems like these should have devoted so much of its imaginative energy to the quest and scripture of

fairyland. The Irish have long since come to be popularly regarded, not as lovers of the day's life but as the idealists of Tir-na-nOg, the country of the young. The two things are not really contradictory. It is the very love of the day's life which has fired the poets with the longing to immortalise life at its most exultant—the life of golden lads and girls. Even to-day an almost pagan idolatry of youth peeps out now and then in the Irish temperament. Lovers of every feature and shadow of loveliness, the Irish have, more keenly than most peoples, resented the harsh prose of a world in which the brave and the beautiful are herded down to one dusty end with chimney-sweepers. The mockery of age and its ugliness is one of the persistent notes in Irish literature. Synge did not invent the hag as the cockshy of invective. The Old Woman of Beare in the eleventh-century poem, who has become a nun in her old age, is a more horrid and disastrous figure than any of Synge's, as she bitterly contrasts her present holy estate with the pagan joys of her youth :

> Amen ! and woe is me !
> I lie here rotting like a broken tree ;
> Each acorn has its day, and needs must fall :
> Time makes an end of all !
>
> I had my day with kings !
> We drank the brimming mead, the ruddy wine,
> Where now I drink whey-water ; for company more fine
> Than shrivelled hags, hag though I am, I pine.

The bitter rebelliousness of the poem—a dramatic masterpiece the genius of which can be only faintly suggested in a quotation—is still more effectively concentrated in Dr Meyer's prose translation of the first of these verses :

Amen! woe is me!
Every acorn has to drop.
After feasting by shining candles
To be in the gloom of a prayer-house.

But Miss Hull's versions, skilful and melodious and interpretative, will usually be found happy supplements to Dr Meyer's in cases where both have translated the same poem. In reading translations of poetry, at the best, we are imprisoned in a kind of Plato's cave, seeing only the shadows thrown on the wall by the passing world behind our backs. Prose translations, perhaps, cast the clearer silhouettes. But the translator into verse occasionally enables us to catch the tone of a voice, the light on a face, which we might otherwise have missed.

At the same time, more than once one finds oneself wishing that Miss Hull had been content with giving the exact prose of some of the modern—or, at least, comparatively modern—lyrics. One feels this especially in regard to *Donall Oge*, where, indeed, she has compromised by leaving two of the most significant lines without rhyme or metre. Do not the rhymes trammel the imaginative march of this exquisite lament of a country girl tragically deserted?

You have taken the East from me and you have taken the West,
You have taken the path that is before me and the path that is behind;
The moon is gone from me by night, and the sun is gone by day,
Alas! I greatly dread you have stolen my God away!
. . . . . .
I heard the dog speak of you and the sun gone down,
I heard the snipe calling aloud from the marshlands brown;
It is you are the lonely bird flitting from tree to tree—
May you never find your mate if you find not me!

On the other hand, nothing could be happier than Miss Hull's verse-translation of that other love-song, which begins:

> The stars stand up in the air,
> The sun and the moon are set,
> The sea that ebbed dry of its tide
> Leaves no single pebble wet;
> The cuckoo keeps saying each hour
> That she, my Storeen, is fled—
> O Girl of the brave, free tresses,
> Far better had you struck me dead!

One could go on quoting extract after extract from Miss Hull and Dr Sigerson and the other translators and anthologists of Irish poetry, not merely as examples of beautiful literature but as expressions of this or that phase of the Irish genius and temper. No study of the psychology of race could enlighten the careful reader in regard to Ireland half so well as the songs of love, of war, of religion, of death, of revenge. Irish history survives alike in the flashing war-songs, and in triumphant pieces of melancholy, such as Mangan's *O Woman of the Piercing Wail.* Not less important as a key to the secrets of the old Irish civilisation are the religious poems, like that noble prayer of St Patrick's which contains the lines:

> Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
> Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise,
> Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
> Christ in the mouth of every one who speaks of me,
> Christ in every eye that sees me,
> Christ in every ear that hears me.

Those who care indeed may discover in the translated literature the abundant soul of Ireland, and they will discover in it, I believe, a revelation, not merely of a national genius, but of the beauty of

old, heroic and simple things, which may be related to nationality but which transcends it.

II

It was the contention of the late Thomas MacDonagh, in his book, *Literature in Ireland*, that a distinctive Irish literature has recently grown up in the English language, and that this is due to the fact that English has at long last become the daily language of the great majority of the Irish people. The Irish mind, according to this argument, had hitherto either expressed itself in the Irish language or had been too exhausted and broken to express itself at all. English-speaking Irishmen had written poetry and prose of genius, but they wrote for an English audience: their imaginations and sympathies were English, not Irish. Goldsmith, Burke and Sheridan are but three names in a long line of Irish genius (including, in our own time, the names of Oscar Wilde and Mr Bernard Shaw) which has emigrated to England in search of an audience. The truth is that until recently there was very little hope of an Irish audience for Irish authors unless they talked the language of politics. Even to-day it may be doubted whether Ireland supports a single native author. The Abbey Theatre company goes wandering to London and New York in search of funds. A. E. is a painter and journalist as well as a poet. I doubt whether Mr Yeats's Irish sales alone would justify the publication of a single one of his books from a commercial point of view. Even in England the public for literature, though not the public for books, is astonishingly small. In Ireland, until the other day, it might almost have been packed into a reasonably sized excursion train. The world-success of Synge, the reputation of Mr Yeats,

the Maunsel publishing-house, the growing prosperity of the country, and the spread of secondary and University education have, however, done much to give the Irish author some hope of being able to live on literature if only he could be sure of surviving another century or so. Assuredly, the Irish audience, if it has not supported many authors, has inspired many. The fact that Irish writers have turned their faces to it has given their work, as might have been expected, a new light and originality of intimacy. Irish literature has ceased to be an echo, and has become a beautiful voice. This is one of the most important literary facts of our time.

MacDonagh himself, who was one of the fifteen Irishmen executed for proclaiming an Irish Republic on Easter Monday, 1916, liked to think of the Irish literary movement as a sort of rebellion. He contends in his book that the "note" of the new literature in Ireland—at least of the new literature in Irish— is "a note of pride, of self-reliance, almost of arrogance." "The Gaelic revival," he goes on, "has given to some of us a new arrogance. I am a Gael and I know no cause but of pride in it. . . . My race has survived the wiles of the foreigner here. It has refused to yield even to defeat, and emerges strong to-day, full of hope and of love, with new strength in its arms to work its new destiny, with a new song on its lips and the words of a new language; which is the ancient language, still calling from age to age. . . . This arrogance is a sign of energy, of vitality, and so here is good."

In its most important aspect, however, his book is not a chant of defiance but an attempt to discover and explain the nature of that curiously interesting literature which has grown up in Ireland—chiefly in the English language—during the past century. MacDonagh leaves out of account Irish writers such

as Swift and Goldsmith. Those were contributors to English, not to Anglo-Irish, literature. By Anglo-Irish literature MacDonagh means literature which, though written in the English language, is influenced by Irish modes of thought and addressed principally to an Irish audience. Thus he includes among Anglo-Irish writers Lionel Johnson, who, though an Englishman in upbringing, was adopted into the Irish tradition. He wishes to substitute for the "Celtic note" emphasised by Matthew Arnold something which he calls the "Irish mode." This Irish mode he does not exactly define; but by a poem written in the Irish mode he means a poem which shows "the influence of Irish versification, the influence of the Irish way of speech, the influence of Irish music." It is not that he excludes from Anglo-Irish literature all poetry not written in this mode. He does not find the marks of the Irish mode in the verse of Mr James Stephens, Miss Susan Mitchell or Miss Alice Milligan, but he would scarcely on this account shut out their work from an anthology of Anglo-Irish poetry. By making this concession, he may seem rather to weaken his argument for the existence of a separate Anglo-Irish literature—a literature which is not merely a branch from the stem of English literature. At the same time, he does make out a most interesting case for his contention that Anglo-Irish literature has its roots, not in English literature but in the traditional music and poetry of Ireland and in the almost separate language of the English-speaking peasantry in Ireland to-day. English as it is spoken in Ireland is English that has been turned and twisted to suit the old Gaelic order of speech. Perhaps, however, MacDonagh exaggerates the differences between the Irish and the English or French use of words. Thus he takes a passage from De Quincey on the swarming

life of Southern Asia, ending with the sentence: "Man is a weed in those regions." He then gives us a French version by Baudelaire, who translated this sentence as: "L'homme, dans ces contrées, pousse comme l'herbe." This is followed by a terse Latin translation, and then by a translation into classic Irish prose, which is literally turned into English in this shape: "Where are we then, but than not more grows the growth of wild plants in a soft, sodded grassy place than the fresh growth of the Adam-clan on the arable soil of India?"

One cannot help feeling that the Irish mind must have simpler methods of expressing a simple image than this. These grace notes of speech seem to me to be a vice of style of which every language is capable if perverted from its right use. Mr Pádraic O'Conaire, I imagine, could translate the sentence into Irish as pithy as the English of De Quincey or the French of Baudelaire; and his version would be as well suited to the Irish mode of thinking as the Keatingese version quoted by Mr MacDonagh. It is its imaginative fullness, not its adjectival emptiness, which is the distinction of good Irish writing.

MacDonagh is much nearer one of the secrets of Irish literature when he notes the difference between English and Irish rhythm. "English rhythm," he writes, "is governed by stress. In England the tendency is to hammer the stressed syllables and to slur the unstressed syllables. In Ireland we keep by comparison a uniform stress. A child in Cork, reading the word *unintelligibility*, pronounces all the eight syllables distinctly, without special stress on any, though his voice rises and falls in a kind of tune or croon, going high upon the final syllable." It is because they look for the stresses of Pope and Keats in the verse of Mr Yeats that many readers are at first at a loss before its music. But, none the

less, it has a most exquisite music—a music in many ways akin to that of Irish speech. And so with a great deal of modern Irish verse. "I should say," writes MacDonagh, "that the effects of our more deliberate Irish speech on our verse are these two: first, a prose intonation, not monotonous, being saved by the natural rise and fall of the voice, a remnant of the ancient pitch—a quality, as it were, of chanted speech; and, secondly, a tendency to give, in certain poems, generally of short, rhyming lines, almost equal stress value to all the syllables, a tendency to make the line the metrical unit." There are many other points in regard to which MacDonagh's studies throw light on the differentia of verse written in the Irish mode. At the same time, with some of his points it is impossible to agree. Thus, he confuses two kinds of obscurity in his defence of Irish poets against the charge of being obscure. He regards obscurity as a word applied to what is unknown or strange—Irish tradition, for example, or a personal vision incomprehensible to an English reader—and he quotes, as an example of Irish obscurity, a verse from Mr Colum's *Drover*:

> Then the wet, winding roads,
> Brown bogs and black water,
> And my thoughts on white ships
> And the King of Spain's daughter.

"To us," he comments on this, "there is a world of memory in these lines. . . . Others might well ask, Which King of Spain? Why white ships? and find nothing but suggestions of unpleasantness in the thought of wet roads, brown bogs, and black water. I suppose one has to be baptized Irish to feel the right thing." As a matter of fact, no one would ask these questions who was capable of appreciating poetry above the level of *The Boy Stood on the*

Burning Deck. It is the vague vision in the work of some of the lesser Irish poets, not the novelty of their imagination, of which many critics reasonably complain. MacDonagh contends that, while the Irish use words which are coins the English merely use words which are counters. The truth is, in both countries the great mass of writers make use of the counters of convention. Only the most honest and determined imagination can escape from this peril.

Similarly, it is not always easy to agree with what MacDonagh has to say on the subject of Irish literature—of literature, that is, which is written in the Irish language. When he says, for instance: "Irish prose I believe to be a finer vehicle than English prose. The poise and the concision of the idiomatic Irish sentence make our long series of words in English seem weak by comparison," one feels that it would be much better to say that each language has its special genius, and to leave it at that. Certainly, to quote Keatingese Irish on one page and to speak of the conciseness of Irish on another will only serve to bewilder most readers.

At its present stage, however, the Irish literary movement that is of most interest to the world at large is the movement that expresses itself, not in the Irish, but in the English language. No movement has ever been more industriously "written up." There is a whole library of books about it at the disposal of the historian—good books, bad books, and indifferent books. Mr George Moore has written the comic history of it in *Hail and Farewell!* Mr Yeats has published his reminiscences. Mrs Hinkson's now run to three volumes. And the result is that one knows the names of the Irish minor poets by this time as well as those of the Elizabethan dramatists. No book covers the field so well as Mr Ernest Boyd's *Ireland's Literary Renaissance.* It is a book which is

at once useful in its information and dignified in its criticism. As a survey of the Irish literary movement it is the best thing that has so far been written. Not that one invariably agrees with Mr. Boyd in his ideas as to which Irish authors are really Irish and which are really English. It seems to me wrong to omit all reference to the poems of Mr James Joyce or the essays of T. M. Kettle, and it is equally wrong to leave the work of the authors of *Some Experiences of an Irish R.M.* out of account. The *Irish R.M.* is no doubt merely the last and best of the books in the Lover-Lever tradition, but it is also a masterpiece which has caught the Irish accent with a genius as sure as Synge's or Lady Gregory's. The truth is, it is only possible to write a satisfactory history of modern Irish literature in one way, and that is to include the work of every Irish author of note, whether he derives from Mangan and Ferguson or not.

Mr Boyd wisely begins his history with the appearance of those two poets, whose finest work was their translations from the Irish. At the same time I wish he had tried to do a little justice to Thomas Moore. Moore's work had many admirable Irish qualities, and it did much to popularise Irish melody and Irish themes in Ireland as well as in England. And Mr Boyd is unjust to *The Nation* group as well as to Moore. "Patriotic as was *The Nation* group," he writes, "it cannot in the proper sense of the word be described as national." It would be far nearer the truth to say that, though it was national, it failed in not being sufficiently literary. It was for the most part a national journalistic movement, not a national literary movement. But good journalism is as necessary to a nation as good literature. As for the men of letters in it, Mangan was the one writer of soaring genius among them. He brought, as it were, a new spirit into Ireland out of the clouds and

out of the dead centuries. He was the most Gaelic of all poets who have written in English.

Mr Standish O'Grady is regarded by many critics as the immediate inspirer of the Irish literary revival. As Mr Boyd points out, however, Dr Douglas Hyde's translations from the Irish have also immense importance in a history of the development of an Anglo-Irish literature. It is in the prose translation of *The Love-Songs of Connacht* that the student "will find the source of what has come to be regarded as the chief discovery, and most notable characteristic, of the drama of the Irish literary Revival, the effective employment of the Anglo-Irish idiom." For myself I think still earlier anticipations of this may be found in Patrick Kennedy's versions of Irish legends and fairy-tales. But it was certainly Dr Hyde who taught Synge how to write his gorgeous sentences. "*The Love-Songs of Connacht*," writes Mr Boyd, "were the constant study of the author of *The Playboy*, whose plays testify, more than those of any other writer, to the influence of Hyde's prose." Had it not been for Dr Hyde, he adds, Synge's "most striking achievement might never have been known." And he quotes an example of Dr Hyde's Anglo-Irish, which is clearly a foreshadowing of the Synge word-decorations that all the world knows:

If you were to see the sky-woman, and she prepared and dressed,
Of a fine sunny day in the street, and she walking,
And a light kindled out of her shining bosom,
That would give sight to the man without an eye:
There is the love of hundreds in the forehead of her face,
Her appearance is, as it were, the Star of Monday,
And if she had been in being in the time of the gods,
It is not to Venus the apple would have been delivered up.

The Irish literary movement may be said to have given the world a new style. It did this largely, it has been shown, as a result of literary nationalism.

Irish literature had to become national in order to become international.

III

No aspect of the Irish revival has made a deeper impression on the world at large than the dramatic. Lady Gregory traces back the origin of the Irish theatre to a conversation between Mr Yeats and herself at Coole in 1898. The first performance was given on 8th May 1899, when an absurd attempt was made to obtain a hostile reception for Mr Yeats's *Countess Cathleen*, on the ground that it was contrary to Catholic orthodoxy that a lady who sold her soul, even to help the poor, should ultimately be admitted into heaven. Luckily, the average Catholic theatre-goer in Dublin refused to take the charge seriously, and so eminent a Catholic as Dr William Barry wrote to Mr Yeats to assure him that the moral of his story was on all fours with St Paul's "I wish to be anathema for my brethren."

The hero of the dramatic movement, as he is the greatest literary figure in modern Ireland, is Mr W. B. Yeats. Even if we recognise that Synge had the genius of drama in a higher degree than Mr Yeats, and that Mr Moore has the genius of fiction beyond almost anyone now writing in English, as he shows especially in his reminiscences, it is time that the intellectual world realised that Mr Yeats's poetic genius is one of the most splendid of recent times. That he put this genius into harness for the sake of the Irish dramatic movement may not have been fortunate for himself, but what a send-off it gave to the movement! His *Kathleen Ni Houlihan* brought the youth of Nationalist Ireland behind the new theatre; and his *King's Threshold*, in which Mr Frank Fay spoke

verse as one has seldom heard it spoken since on the stage, gave the theatre dignity outside Ireland as a centre of new artistic excitements. Nor should we forget the part that the Fays have played in the building up of an Irish theatre. The Irish Literary Theatre was at first merely a society for importing English actors into Dublin to produce plays by Irish writers, and might have continued to be so for a considerable time, if Mr Frank Fay had not happened, in August, 1900, to read an article in *The Morning Leader* in which "Mr William Archer, reviewing a volume of Norwegian dramatic criticism, explained how Ole Bull, the great Norwegian violinist, had formed the Norwegian National Theatre for seven or eight amateurs who had answered his advertisement for people wishing to make a profession of singing, dancing, and acting." This last was the theatre that had "hatched Ibsen." By April, 1902, the efforts of the Fay brothers were so successful that they had founded the Irish National Dramatic Company, and were producing "A. E.'s" *Deirdre* and Mr Yeats's *Kathleen Ni Houlihan.* The Irish National Theatre Society soon followed, and in 1904 Miss Horniman stepped forward and built—or rebuilt—the Abbey Theatre as we know it to-day. To the outsider, the history of the Abbey Theatre may seem a continuous advance from one height of prosperity to another. That is because the movement always succeeded in getting talked about. As a matter of fact, however, it did not always succeed in getting audiences; and Lady Gregory gives us a pathetic reminiscence of those empty and discouraging days: "Often I have gone out by the stage door when the curtain was up, and come round into the auditorium by the front hall, hoping that in the dimness I might pass for a new arrival, and so encourage the few scattered people in the stalls."

It was *The Playboy*, of course, that made the theatre world-famous. Before *The Playboy* it was regarded, more or less, as a charming trifle. After *The Playboy* it was seen to be an institution serious enough to set men fighting about it. To me *The Playboy* has always seemed one of the least of Synge's plays, and not an inhabitant of the same artistic world as *Riders to the Sea* and *The Well of the Saints*. At the same time, whatever may be one's critical opinion of it, it is historically the most exciting play the Abbey Theatre has produced. People have often expressed their amazement that so exuberant an extravaganza should ever have been objected to by people with a sense of humour. But much as one detests the rowdyism that tried to drive it from the theatre, the provocativeness of the play is obvious to anyone who has eyes to see. Both Lady Gregory and Mr Yeats realised that the play as it was written, and is now printed, was too bold for unexpurgated production. "I did not think," Lady Gregory tells us, "it was fit to be put on the stage without cutting"; and Mr Yeats, who was away from Dublin during the rehearsals of the play, wrote to Lady Gregory: "I would like to know how you thought *The Playboy* acted. . . . Have they cleared many of the objectionable sentences out of it?" The cuts were not made for the first night; they have been made in every performance since. Those who wish to understand why Dublin—or a small portion of it—rioted on those first nights, should read *The Playboy*, and read it, not in the easy-going spirit in which it is now acted but in the light of the far fiercer humour of the early performances. There is no excuse for the abominable behaviour of the rowdies; but one would be stupid not to see how their simple emotions came to be outraged.

M. Bourgeois, in his valuable book on Synge and the Irish theatre, enables us to understand how it was that a man of Synge's temperament came into such violent collision with popular Irish opinion. Synge, partly as a result of physical frailty, "revelled in all that was pungent, truculent and savage," and "although his mind was fundamentally sane, his impaired bodily health had distorted his vision from the beginning." Those who have detected a recurrent eroticism, especially in his later plays, have often been reproved by Mr Yeats; but M. Bourgeois gives evidence on their side when he tells us how in Paris Synge lived for a time "in rooms overlooking the beautiful garden of a convent of nuns. The view of the convent prompted in Synge the idea of a play of monastic life, which Mr Yeats read in MS., and which was marked by a strong eroticism." Not that Synge led the wild, erotic existence which, according to M. Bourgeois, has at times been imputed to him. "Personally," M. Bourgeois writes, "he had, I believe, a profound contempt, at least a fundamental distaste for the promiscuous sensuality of the *roué*. A significant anecdote is told of how a friend, visiting the salon, . . . criticised the naked figure of a woman in one of Henner's pastoral paintings. Synge said he knew nothing of such matters. . . . Synge always remained as chaste and pure as ever man was." On the other hand, wild language shocks the conventional more than wild life; and in wild language Synge delighted. "His language was often coarse, at times, I have heard, almost incredibly gross, and he indulged in magnificent swear-words, which had something of the Elizabethan or Rabelaisian licentiousness." His crime at the Abbey Theatre was that in his plays he held the mirror up too boldly to certain aspects of his own nature. His comic eroticism, his freakish

delights in characters and words that beautifully ignored the Ten Commandments, his mockery of the holy standards of commonplace existence, these were too much for the respectability of a Dublin audience.

Synge himself, however, it is worth remembering, was never hated in Dublin as his plays were. He was, as M. Bourgeois reveals him to us, a gentle and attractive figure, and his gallant fight with death gave him a tragic interest for all who knew him. He died in March, 1909, in a private hospital in Dublin. "In the early morning Synge said to the nurse: 'It's no use fighting death any longer,' and turned over and died." So Mr Yeats has written. Since Synge's death the theatre cannot be said to have grown less bold in the fight for imaginative independence. The atmosphere has changed, however. The dramatic movement has in recent years turned away from romantic comedy towards naturalism, as may be seen in the plays of the younger writers, Mr Lennox Robinson, Mr St John Ervine and Mr T. C. Murray.

IV

Mr Yeats sometimes appears in the literary legend of the moment as a typicial minor poet with a minor poet's affectations—a dreamy, effeminate person in sad velvet. The real Mr Yeats is the very opposite of this. He is a man of aquiline energy, tall, thin, high-shouldered, keen-faced, a restless and fearless fighter for ideas. He is in his figure nearer Hamlet than Falstaff; but he is a Hamlet of the sword. He may in one aspect be the Hamlet who has seen ghosts and in another the Hamlet who takes pleasure in riotous and jewelled words. His poetry has come out of some spirit of isolation and

luxurious reverie. He is more than a poet, however—more than the Hamlet of the passive reveries and speculations. He has shown himself a pugnacious man of action, ever since, at the close of the last century, he set himself to give Ireland its theatre and to make Dublin a capital of the arts again.

He expressed his views on the prospects and functions of an Irish theatre in the course of a conversation some years ago.

"We have now," he said, "a steady popular audience at the Abbey"—the society's theatre in Dublin—"I mean an audience from the people, such as clerks and shop-boys. Our difficulty is to attract the stalls audience—the middle classes."

"You think, however," I asked him, "that the upper classes in Ireland are beginning to take an interest in Irish things—the drama, for instance?"

"Undoubtedly," he said, with conviction. "I think we are at the beginning of a movement in Ireland which will affect people of all classes. I believe we are on the verge, just on the verge, of a great awakening of thought and intellect—a period of ideas and of liberation."

"And the Abbey Theatre is taking a part in this movement? Do you not find that the Abbey plays are too 'cultured,' too 'high art,' to affect the imagination and thought of the people?"

"No," replied Mr Yeats; "we have taken our plays to Belfast, to Cork, to Galway, to Sligo, and everywhere the people have come to see them and liked them. Perhaps the transition stage we are passing through explains this. Ireland is waking up to new interests. In some ways Ireland at present is more like Elizabethan England than modern England. In the times of Elizabeth, English men and women were passing from the stage where they were absorbed in the beauty of external things and in

external events. They were becoming interested in the drama of the soul, in the struggle within a man's self, and as a result the Elizabethan drama is a drama of great souls. Synge in *The Playboy* is an Elizabethan writing about Elizabethans. Compare the people Synge writes about with the people in a modern English play, such as a play of Galsworthy's. Galsworthy's people are people without souls; their only standards, the things they worship and fear, are external to themselves—social conventions, social systems, the British Constitution—all of them as external as the Pyramids of Egypt. What kind of language can you put in the mouths of these poor, pale, shivering creatures obsessed by external things? Synge, on the other hand, gives you the drama of the soul—of his own soul, if you like. And the soul, when it speaks, demands splendour and beauty of language to express itself. Synge did exactly as the Elizabethan dramatists did, in pouring out his soul through his plays in extravagant and joyous words."

"But do you think," I interrupted him, "that the Irish peasant about whom Synge wrote is such an extravagant, joyous person as he is sometimes painted?"

"I think he is," said Mr Yeats, "when circumstances permit it. The Irishman, I am sure, has a great deal of the gay, extravagrant nature of the Elizabethan Englishman. You remember some traveller described the Englishman of Elizabeth's time as 'witty, boastful and corrupt.' The Englishman was more Continental then."

"You believe, then, that the Irishman, like the Elizabethan Englishman, has a special genius for the drama?"

"I do. Perhaps one reason why we are dramatic in instinct is that we have always had something to fight for. Irish life has been full of stress and

danger—an atmosphere which makes for dramatic genius."

"But the Englishman," I suggested, "has been prosperous, and has not had the same struggle, the same insecurity, and yet he has produced more great literature than we have."

"Literature, perhaps," admitted Mr Yeats, "but not drama, in the last two hundred years. At least the greatest English dramatists for two hundred years have nearly all been Irishmen, or have had Irish blood in their veins. I think, too, Havelock Ellis has made calculations showing what an immense proportion of the actresses on the English stage have had Irish blood. Then our people have, perhaps more than any other people, the gift of fantasy. Go and talk to the Galway peasant and you will find it in him as you will find it in Synge or Lady Gregory, or Oscar Wilde, or Bernard Shaw, or any of the Irish dramatists. It is in all classes of our people. The duellists at the end of the eighteenth century had it. There was fantasy in the man who made the bet that 'within a year he would play ball against the walls of Jerusalem.' The modern Englishman would say baldly that within such-and-such a time he would go to Jerusalem and back again. Lever had this gift in some measure, but he was imperfectly educated. Still, we must not underestimate Lever."

"That reminds me. Sometimes the Abbey dramatists are accused, as Lever was, of not giving us real Irish peasants at all, but a new sort of stage Irishman."

Mr Yeats waved his hand in a certain restlessness of scorn. "Perhaps," he agreed, after a moment, "our dramatists have selected some types rather than others, as a group of artists always select the types which they find most interesting. You must not think, however, that writers like Lady Gregory

and Synge do not know the Irish peasant. Before Synge wrote about Irish peasants he had gone and lived among them, and Lady Gregory knows the peasant as it could never be said that Kickham, whose peasants were merely amiable fictions, knew them. Still, I think Lady Gregory herself has said that her plays are not merely about Irish life. Someone called *Spreading the News* a satire on an Irish village. It is quite as much a satire on London society. Lady Gregory gives us in her plays her own spiritual vision, using the men and women whom she knows best and finds most interesting as to some extent symbolic figures."

"Still," I put in, wishing to hear his opinion of the work of the younger men, "the new Irish dramas—Colum's *Thomas Muskerry* and Robinson's *The Cross Roads*, for instance—tend to be realistic rather than symbolic, don't they?"

"Yes, the younger men are undoubtedly becoming realistic."

"Once when you had seen *Ghosts*," I continued, "you said that perhaps this sort of realistic drama was needed as the 'medicine of great cities.' Do you think that Ireland requires the medicine of a realistic drama?"

Mr Yeats drummed his fingers on the arm of the chair, looking as though this were a problem which had troubled him but which he had not yet entirely solved.

"Perhaps," he said, with apparent regret. "I sometimes think that the realistic drama will produce the greatest effect in Ireland."

I rose to leave, but before going away, being a pedestrian person, troubled by politics, I said to him: "Your dislike of political obsessions in the theatre does not mean, I suppose, that you have ceased to be an Irish Nationalist?"

"In our theatre," he said, "we have nothing to do with politics. They could only make our art insincere. But, speaking for myself, I cannot see how the Ireland I wish for can come about without a national government."

CHAPTER XVIII

VOICES OF THE NEW IRELAND: (1) P. H. PEARSE AND HIS WRITINGS

IMMEDIATELY a man dies for what he believes, everything he has said or written assumes a new value. One feels that, however his beliefs may have quarrelled with one's own, he has at any rate put an honest signature to his work. His words are no longer the mere casual utterances of a passing contemporary. One reads them in the light of his death, and they seem mysteriously laden with meaning, confessions out of the depths, a part of the poetry of fate. It is as though the soul of the dead man, having left his body, had gone to dwell in his books. We can no longer read them single-mindedly as literature. They are a ghostly bequest in regard to which we do not feel quite free to play the critic. That, at least, is the world's attitude. It is fascinated and unquestioning as in the presence of a spirit.

It was in this way that Rupert Brooke became a figure rather than an author on the morrow of his death. One cannot expect *The Collected Works of P. H. Pearse* to assist to another canonisation of the same sort among English readers; but in Ireland the process has already begun, and Father Browne, in the course of his eloquent introduction, expresses the conviction that generations of Irishmen yet to be born "will come to the reading of this book as to a kind of *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum*, a journey

to the realisation of Ireland." Pearse "will appeal to the imagination of times to come," he declares, "more than any of the rebels of the last hundred and thirty years. . . . His name and deeds will be taught by mothers to their children long before the time when they will be learned in school histories." Here then is a book which a considerable number of human beings already regard as a holy book because a man died for what is written in it. One cannot help, therefore, approaching it with curiosity. One is no longer troubled as to whether one agrees with the author. It is enough for most of us that the author agreed, as it were, with himself—that he harmonised his life with his principles to the last logic of dying for them. Pearse, it will be remembered, was the first signatory to the manifesto proclaiming the birth of an Irish Republic on Easter Monday, 1916. As President of the Provisional Government, he was also the first of the insurgent leaders to be shot. On the day of his death he was scarcely a name to the majority of his fellow-countrymen. Thanks to the statesmanship of Sir John Maxwell, he has now become a historic and almost worshipped figure.

I met Pearse, I think, only on two occasions. The second was when, eight years ago, he and Thomas MacDonagh showed me over the boys' school he had opened in Rathmines. A dark man with a queer fixity of eye and a habit of close and earnest scrutiny, he struck one as being first of all a propagandist, in contrast to MacDonagh who was obviously first of all a scholar and artist. One felt that conversation with Pearse would be mainly a discussion of causes, while conversation with MacDonagh might be a discussion of anything under the sun. It may have been merely a superficial impression; but one did not think of Pearse at that time either as a poet or

a prose-writer with a place in Irish literature. It is curious to remember that one did not even think of him as a politician. One thought of him first and last as a man who was anxious to extend the use of the Irish language and to build on it a distinctively Irish culture. Once or twice, while he was editing the Gaelic League paper, called (in English) *The Sword of Light*, he had shown leanings towards Sinn Fein; but politics seemed with him to be a secondary interest. He was, in the opinion of most people, simply an educationist. Even the stories he used to write in Irish struck one as being the work not of an artist who had to write or perish, but of a propagandist who was desirous to help the movement to produce a contemporary literature in the Irish language. At the same time, one never dreamed of regarding his enthusiasm as that of a grammarian. He was bent upon the making of an Irish civilisation, which would be as unlike English civilisation as is the civilisation of France or Bohemia. One of the class-rooms in his school was decorated with the names of the great Irishmen of the past, all (or nearly all) of them figures of rebellion. The inside of his school was painted, one fancied, so as to be a sort of temple of Irish heroism. I can recall only one trivial sentence of the conversation of MacDonagh and Pearse on that occasion. It is MacDonagh's invitation to go along to a room where a class in Irish phonetics taught by a well-known priest was being held. "Do come," he said, with a school-boy's bright look of mischief, "and see Father —— making faces."

The Pearse we find in the *Collected Works* is something more than an earnest schoolmaster. His earnestness has now been intensified into passion. His faith has become exalted into mysticism. His plays and poems are prophetic of suffering. He has

now begun to believe in the necessity of bloodshed no less than in the necessity of the Irish language. He accepts the traditional ideal of an Irish Republic, conceived by Wolfe Tone in sympathy with the French Revolution and endorsed by the Fenians within living memory, and life presents itself to his vision as an altar of sacrifice to this ideal. He becomes a sort of evangelist crying in the wilderness that, for Ireland, without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. He makes himself the preacher of a holy war on behalf of freedom. He summons the young men of his time to live, as a hostile critic I have already quoted said after his death, in the spirit of Christian Bushido. He becomes a visionary and foretells battle-fields. He can scarcely see the present world for the flashing of swords on the day of destiny. He seldom descends in his plays and poems to the level of normal life. The two most interesting of his plays, *The Singer* and *The King*, are visions of self-sacrifice in battle. In the former, the curtain falls on the hero as he goes out against the Gall (the foreigners) with the cry: "One man can free a people as one Man redeemed the world. I will take no pike. I will go into the battle with bare hands. I will stand up before the Gall as Christ hung naked before men on the tree!"

His poems are utterances of the same passion of renunciation for an ideal. One of them, entitled *Renunciation*, begins:

> Naked I saw thee,
> O beauty of beauty,
> And I blinded mine eyes
> For fear I should fail.

He writes as one who has deliberately thrown over the happy life of artists and lovers for the destiny of the martyr:

I blinded my eyes,
And I closed my ears,
I hardened my heart
And I smothered my desire.

I turned my back
On the vision I had shaped,
And to this road before me
I turned my face.

I have turned my face
To this road before me,
To the deed that I see
And the death I shall die.

One or two of the poems certainly reveal the fact that Pearse had in him the genius of the artist to a degree that one used not to imagine possible. There is, for instance, the *Lullaby of a Woman of the Mountain*, which begins:

Little gold head, my house's candle,
You will guide all wayfarers that walk this mountain.

Little soft mouth that my breast has known,
Mary will kiss you as she passes.

Little round cheek, O smoother than satin,
Jesus will lay His hand on you.

The last verses of this poem are especially charming, expressing in a beautiful way the little noisy world of night that must be sung to silence:

Mary's kiss on my baby's mouth,
Christ's little hand on my darling's cheek!

House, be still, and ye little grey mice,
Lie close to-night in your hidden lairs.

Moths on the window fold your wings,
Little black chafers, silence your humming.

Plover and curlew, fly not over my house,
Do not speak, wild barnacle, passing over the mountain.

Things of the mountain that wake in the night-time,
Do not stir to-night till the daylight whitens!

One finds the same charm, the same cataloguish charm, in *The Wayfarer*. It is not a great poem, but it is a very moving poem, and, in revealing the list of the things that Pearse loved, it shows that he had the imagination of a poet—the imagination that aches as it beholds the visible beauty of the world. In *The Wayfarer* he meditates sadly on all he was so passionately to renounce:

The beauty of the world hath made me sad,
This beauty that will pass;
Sometimes my heart hath shaken with great joy
To see a leaping squirrel in a tree,
Or a red lady-bird upon a stalk,
Or little rabbits in a field at evening,
Lit by a slanting sun. . . .

It is not of his own renunciation he is thinking, however, but of the impermanence of all lovely things—the theme of so much of the world's poetry. He thinks last of all—he was always specially moved by the ways of children—of:

Children with bare feet upon the sands
Of some ebbed sea, or playing in the streets
Of little towns in Connacht,
Things young and happy.
And then my heart hath told me:
These will pass,
Will pass and change, will die and be no more,
Things bright and green, things young and happy;
And I have gone upon my way
Sorrowful.

It is as illustrations of the moods of an Irish Republican rather than as poems of independent

beauty that these poems will be read by most people for many years to come. That he met his death as he did makes his rann, or song, in praise of death as significant to us as an actual experience.

One finds a certain mawkishness in one of his poems, *Little Lad of the Tricks*, as in some of his earlier stories; and one dislikes finding a child addressed in such a verse as:

> There is a fragrance in your kiss
> That I have not found yet
> In the kisses of women
> Or in the honey of their bodies.

On the other hand, the poems about freedom cannot be accused of being sentimental. They are exultant, high-voiced, passionate, like the improvisations of a bard. One can almost see the hand sweeping the strings as one reads the opening lines of *The Rebel*:

I am come of the seed of the people, the people that sorrow,
That have no treasure but hope,
No riches laid up but a memory
Of an Ancient glory. . . .

One can see the hushed audience, tense with emotion, as the evangel proceeds to its rapturous confession of faith:

I say to my people that they are holy, that they are august,
despite their chains,
That they are greater than those that hold them, and stronger
and purer,
That they have but need of courage, and to call on the name
of their God,
God the unforgetting, the dear God that loves the peoples
For whom He died naked, suffering shame.

The religious element in Pearse's patriotic poetry will puzzle those readers who judge him not according

to his ideal but according to their own. They must remember that to his mind Ireland was as distinct a nation from England as Poland is from Russia or Germany, and Home Rule seemed to him merely a subtle form of Unionism. He believed that the full measure of Irish freedom could only be won if he and his contemporaries were ready to die for it. He admitted it could only be won by a miracle, but he called for the miracle:

And so I speak.
Yea, ere my hot youth pass, I speak to my people and say:
Ye shall be foolish as I; ye shall scatter, not save;
Ye shall venture your all, lest ye lose what is more than all;
Ye shall call for a miracle, taking Christ at His word.
And for this I will answer, O people, answer here and hereafter,
O people that I have loved, shall we not answer together? . . .

The bard of old was half rhapsodist and half poet, and that, I should say, is the nearest one can get to an exact description of Pearse as an author. His stories scarcely count; they are too much lacking in the detail of life. Other writers of fiction in Irish, such as Mr Padraic O'Conaire, surpass him as creative artists. But the poems and plays have the voice of a man tortured with circumstance—a man across whose face breaks the light of an apocalyptic faith. I confess I see more error than truth in the faith in redemption by bloodshed. But these plays and poems are beautiful with a far finer faith than that—faith in the destiny of the poor and the oppressed, and in the power of self-sacrifice to redeem the travailing world.

CHAPTER XIX

VOICES OF THE NEW IRELAND: (2) MRS J. R. GREEN

WHEN Mrs Green's *Irish Nationality* was published, a writer in a Dublin paper began his review of it with the words: "By God, this is a book!" That sentence suggests, a little violently, the Irish opinion of Mrs Green's place as a historian. No lover of the cold (or, if you like the word better, the inanimate) facts of history ever broke out into an exclamation like that in book-review. It was obviously written by one who regarded Mrs Green, not as a bloodless chronicler of events but as the champion and vindicator of a nation.

If anyone doubts that Ireland needed a champion in the historical even more than in the political sphere, he will do well to read Mrs Green's own short essay, "The Way of History in Ireland." It is an exposure, at once impassioned and wittily contemptuous, of the way in which the historians, instead of setting themselves to open up new fields of knowledge in Irish history, have successively contented themselves with muddying the pedigree of the Irish people. "History does not repeat itself," said either Wilde or Mr Max Beerbohm; "historians repeat each other." And the witticism is seriously true of most of the Irish history that has been written. One after another, the historians have leaped through the gap of tradition, like a rout of sheep, and pastured on the old fables that represent the seven-hundred-years' duel between England and Ireland as a duel between

civilisation, on the one hand, and barbarism on the other. This was scarcely questioned in collegiate circles. One accepted it as one accepted the superiority of Abraham Lincoln to Sitting Bull, of Queen Victoria to the Queen of the Baganda. To contend that the quarrel between England and Ireland, so far from being a quarrel between civilisation and barbarism, was a quarrel beween one civilisation and another, would have been regarded as a paradox of which only an irresponsible Irishman would be capable. More than that, it would have been to challenge the whole world of political and social ideas in which the historians of Ireland had hitherto lived and moved and had their being. It would even have been to question the ethics of Imperialism. For Irish history has been written for the most part, not in the service of truth but in the service of Empire.

In Ireland, as Mrs Green says, "history has a peculiar doom. It is enslaved in the chains of the Moral Tale—the good man (English) who prospered, and the bad man (Irish) who came to a shocking end." If an Irishman ventured to cast doubt on the political tract that resulted—whether on its ideas or its instances—he was dismissed in a scholarly and judicial manner as a politician, a biassed and querulous person, and any references to massacres and murders perpetrated by Elizabethan civilisers were discountenanced as peculiarly unpleasant examples of "the Irish whine." In this way the Irish people were slowly being drained of that self-respect which comes of being conscious heirs to a fine tradition. More and more of them were coming to say, in tones of self-pity and resignation: "Ah, where would we be without England?" Irish history before the arrival of Strongbow "came to be looked on as merely a murky prelude to the civilising work of England—

a preface, savage, transitory, and of no permanent interest, to be rapidly passed over till we come to the English pages of the book." Clearly a nation which accepted such an account of its ancestry as this without question would be on the road to spiritual slavery.

It would be absurd to suggest that Mrs Green was the first writer who sought to bring Ireland out of the Egypt in which the historians had bound her. From Lynch, the author of *Cambrensis Eversus*, down to Dr Joyce, many fine-hearted scholars have given us Irish history from the Irish, instead of the Imperial, point of view. Patriots, such as John Mitchel, too, have written history out of imaginations of blood and fire, and the common people have kept alive rumours of an ancestry of kings—rumours which only helped to convince a good many people that the melancholy Celt was also a melancholy humbug. But none of these praisers of Ireland caught the ear of the universities or of the world which the universities feed with the latest fashion in learning. The only thing recognised as having any excellence in the long procession of Irish history since the time of the saints was a colonial, not a national, institution —Grattan's Parliament. That this was admitted to have any virtue was due chiefly to the fresh-eyed and honest scholarship of Lecky. Mrs Green bids fair to do for Ireland as a whole, the Ireland of Art MacMurrough and Margaret O'Connor and the O'Neills, what Lecky did for the restricted Ireland of Swift and Grattan. She is the first writer taking what we might call a Continental view of history to offer us anything better than the dreary traditional statement of the record of Ireland. An authority on the social life of mediæval Europe, a historian who had already won the praise of scholars by her work in English history, a brilliant, eloquent and

imaginative writer, possessed of an indomitable patience in research and an indomitable faith, she has given Ireland for the first time what it so badly needed in regard to its history—a skilled advocate before the world.

Mrs Green does not profess to have rewritten Irish history. As may be seen in her reply to the strictures of Mr Robert Dunlop on her most important work, *The Making of Ireland and its Undoing*, she claims merely to have brought forward certain new evidence showing that "need has arisen for an entire review of the whole materials for Irish history and of the old conclusions." Her *Making of Ireland and its Undoing* is a brilliant setting forth of the case for inquiry. Further than this, it instances a thousand good reasons for believing that the mediæval Irish, so far from being a mob of barbarians addicted to the slaughter of their near relatives, as they were generally painted, were comparatively ordinary white Europeans who "made money, traded, built houses, talked Latin, studied medicine and law, [and] otherwise behaved like other people of the Middle Ages." Other historians were content to repeat, like a litany, the Newgate Calendar of mediæval Ireland. Mrs Green, in the first place, reminded them that warfare between small communities was not confined to Ireland in those days, and went on to show that, besides a good deal of blood-letting, mediæval Ireland was also a scene of "cheerful progress of trade and culture," and that this progress was deliberately destroyed by the civilising agenies of Dublin Castle.

Orthodox historians, relying on the reports of casual and official travellers, who usually did not know a word of the language of the country, refuse, of course, to credit the evidence for the existence of an Irish national civilisation. Mrs Green, in one of the most attractive chapters of *The Old Irish World*,

which she calls "A Great Irish Lady," gives us a sketch of a very noble impersonation of Irish culture in the fifteenth century. This was Margaret O'Connor, who called the learned of all Ireland about her at a great festival at Killeigh, in 1434, when, "clad in cloth of gold, her dearest friends about her, her clergy and judges too," she began the festivities by laying two chalices of gold on the altar as an offering to God Almighty, and dispensed hospitality to 2700 poets and musicians and learned men. Such a living figure of Irish culture is set in vain before the makers of orthodox history. They prefer to judge the social condition of the "native Irish" by what Fynes Moryson says he heard from a Bohemian baron, whose name he does not give. Or, rather, as Mrs Green shows, they base their judgments, not on what Fynes Moryson said the Bohemian baron said, but on what they themselves say Fynes Moryson said the Bohemian baron said—a very different thing. In Fynes Moryson we read how the baron, coming to the house of the O'Cahan, "was met at the door with sixteen women, all naked, excepting their loose mantles" and so forth. That is much too simple and vague a story for Froude, who accordingly transforms the mantle-clad women—who might have been servants, dependants or refugees—into "daughters of distinguished Ulster chiefs," squatting in their fathers' castles "in the presence of strangers, and bare of clothing, as if Adam had never sinned." Professor Mahaffy, in an essay in an excellent publication of the Georgian Society, added his share of corroborative detail to the story, and spoke of "the O'Cahan in his wigwam, surrounded by his stark-naked wives and daughters." Thus is Irish history written by the impartial and judicial scholars of Empire. In this way, what Mrs Green calls "the barbarian legend" has been heroically kept alive.

Like many pioneers, Mrs Green has to devote a great part of her energies to cutting a way through a monstrous forest of falsehood; but, in essays such as those on Margaret O'Connor and on "The Trade Routes of Ireland," she ever and again pauses to announce her vision of the pleasant places of truth that lie beyond. Those who have been accustomed to think of Ireland as "an island beyond an island," with its very means of communication with the Continent lying through England, will be surprised to discover that the original Irish path to Europe was apparently not through England at all, but directly oversea to Spain and Southern France and Scandinavia. What traffic did Ireland carry on with these countries? Her great gift to the Continent in the early days was, of course, not commerce, but learning and religion; but even then there was manifestly considerable exchange of commodities, and an old poet could speak of Leinster with "its wine-barque upon the purple flood; its shower of silver of great splendour; its torques of gold from the land of the Gaul." As for Ireland as a centre of distribution of culture to Europe, Mrs Green writes:

"Ireland became the source of culture to all Germanic nations; indeed, wherever in the seventh and following centuries education and knowledge is found, it may be traced directly to Irish influence. It has been justly said that at the time of Charles the Bald everyone who spoke Greek on the Continent was almost certainly an Irishman, or taught by an Irishman. By degrees, Irish monasteries, built and supported by Irish money, spread over Europe from Holland to Tarentum, from Gaul to Bulgaria."

Nor did this direct Continental intercourse cease for many hundreds of years. Through the long centuries,

Mrs Green tells us, the Irish "never lost the habit of the sea and of Europe."

"In the Middle Ages Spanish coin was almost the chief currency in Ireland, so great was the Irish trade with Spain; and in the eighteenth century the country was still full of Spanish, Portuguese, and French money in daily use—the moydore, the doubloon, the pistole, the louis d'or, the new Portuguese gold coin. So much so that in the Peninsular War Ireland was ransacked for foreign coins to send to the army in Spain and Portugal."

The passages I have quoted will give some idea of Mrs Green's aim and achievement as an Irish historian. She has rehabilitated Ireland as a civilised European country with an almost continuous record of commerce in trade and learning with other European countries—not a barbarous island beyond an island, a province in a backwater, as the Imperialists pictured it in the nineteenth century, but an enterprising and culture-loving nation. She makes us realise the Ireland of history as a living and growing commonwealth instead of as the conventional shambles. Is the account an impartial one? Mrs Green, in a happy phrase, disclaims "impartiality of the heart." "Love," says an Eastern proverb, "is the net of truth." That is the secret of Mrs Green's genius as a historian. To great gifts of the mind she has added great gifts of the heart. That is why she has succeeded in arriving at a human and beautiful interpretation of Irish history where a thousand colder-blooded scholars have lost themselves as in a maze without a plan.

CHAPTER XX

VOICES OF THE NEW IRELAND: (3) A. E.

I

IT would surprise a good many people to be told that Mr George Russell is the greatest man Ireland has produced since Parnell. Yet this is the considered opinion of many intelligent Irishmen. Not that there are many points of comparison between the genius of Mr Russell and the genius of Parnell. Parnell was a destroying angel; Mr Russell is a creative idealist. Parnell devoted his life to the siege and assault of that lonely castle of injustice known as foreign government. Mr Russell has set himself to lay the foundations of a sociable world which the sons and daughters of God may inhabit without shame. Painter, poet, journalist, mystic and politician—not a party politician, but a builder of civilisation—he has thrown himself into the work of maintaining the co-operative cause in Ireland with a gay and superabundant energy of soul and intellect that bears the mark of the heroic. As editor of *The Irish Homestead*, the weekly organ of the Irish co-operative moment, he gives us what is probably the only agricultural journal in the world which non-agricultural citizens can read not merely without boredom but with delight.

The secret of Mr Russell's appeal is fairly obvious. His whole work, whether as poet, philosopher or co-operative propagandist, is an expression of a

divine vision—the vision of the republic of God, here built in the heart of an individual man and exhibiting itself as a heroic life, and there built in the heart of a whole people and exhibiting itself as a heroic civilisation. For A. E. is not a mystic in order that the soul may indulge herself in bizarre experiences, and he is not a co-operator in order that the farmer may get a penny a pound extra for his butter. His mysticism is allied to the genius of the earth and the common day, and he aims at illumining agricultural co-operation with something of the light of heaven.

He is thus a realist among mystics and an idealist among practical men. His message to the mystic and to the farmer is, as I have said, very much the same. "Every word which really inspires," he writes, in *The Renewal of Youth*, "is spoken as if the Golden Age had never passed. The great teachers ignore the personal identity and speak to the eternal pilgrim." "The soul of Ireland," he declares in *Co-operation and Nationality*, "has to be kindled, and it can only be kindled by the thought of great deeds, and not by the hope of petty parsimonies or petty gains." Consequently, this voice from the Golden Age disguised as a journalist of the world of pigs and dairies and bees is not satisfied to tell the Irish farmer how by combination he can capture this or that market. "The true significance of the movement promoted by Sir Horace Plunkett," he contends, "is that it is an attempt to build up a new social order in Ireland."

Irish rural civilisation has, he sees, been ruined by a number of causes. And Ireland has not been given, as other countries have, an alternative civilisation of the towns. The Irish country-side has become a desert of grass and songlessness. As for the Irish towns:

"We should rage and prophesy over them as the prophets of ancient Israel did over Tyre and Sidon."

Here is ruin indeed—ruin a little exaggerated, perhaps, by the prophet's wrath—but ruin enough to call for the labours of giants. Most people are vaguely satisfied that the ruin can be patched up, if not turned into an earthly paradise, by help from a beneficent monster called Government. A. E. sees that the appeal for the salvation of Ireland must be not to Government, but to the national will and soul. He realises that Congested Districts Boards and similar inventions of the politicians, whatever real and apparent good they may do, are a danger to the will and the self-respect of the people they profess to help. As a result of these persistent State tamperings with the daily lives of Irish men and women, we are now witnessing, he holds, "the tragedy of the decline and fall of the human will in the people. . . . The will is growing powerless to act without partnership with its fetish or idol the State." And again, in a later chapter, he tells us: "The effect of the policy of our present public men is to turn the Irish into a race of economic babies, with their lips for ever nuzzling at the nipples of the State."

To my mind many of the evils of government attacked by A. E. are due to the fact that in Ireland government does not mean government by the people themselves but government from abroad. The attractiveness of his dream of a new civilisation, however, is independent of his subsidiary arguments. Socialists and anti-Socialists may unite in working for this new co-operative commonwealth which A. E. desires to build first in the hearts and then in the country-sides of Ireland. "Wherever there is mutual aid," he tells us, ". . . wherever there is constant give-and-take, wherever the prosperity of the indi-

vidual depends on the prosperity of the community about him, there the social order tends to produce fine types of character, with a devotion to public ideas; and this is the real object of all government." That is surely not opposed to William Morris, who would also have agreed that "the phrase, 'Every man for himself,' is one of the maxims in the gospel according to Beelzebub. The devil's game with men is to divide and conquer them."

And A. E.'s vision of some of the possibilities opened up by co-operative habits and sentiments would hardly have left that artist-designer of a socialist civilisation cold:

"The men in any rural district, united together, could make the land they live in as lovely to look on as the fabled gardens in the valley of Damascus. They could have fruit trees along the hedgerows, and make the country roads beautiful with colour in spring. This has been done in many a rural commune on the Continent, and there is no reason why it should not be done here. Only let us get our men together, get them organised and one improvement will rapidly follow another. For all great deeds by races, all civilisations, were built up by the voluntary efforts of men united together. Sometimes one feels as if there were some higher mind in humanity which could not act through individuals, but only through brotherhoods and groups of men. Anyhow, the civilisation which is based on individualism is mean, and the civilisation based upon great guilds, fraternities, communes and associations is of a higher order. If we are to have any rural civilisation in Ireland it must spring out of co-operation."

It is the distinction of A. E. that he does not

paint Utopias, but holds up charming and realisable visions to those who would set about building a rural civilisation in Ireland—or, indeed, in England, either. He wants to see a newer Athens given to the world, not in terms of the city, but in terms of the country, and he comes as a messenger to the Irish people, bidding them no longer be mere dole-gatherers with shadowy wills, but take upon themselves the burden of being efficient in their daily business, humane and distinguished in their culture, social in their pleasures, and heroic in their aims. Never before has so irresistible a call been uttered for the establishment of a fine free civilisation in Ireland.

Not that A. E. is given to speaking soothing and gracious things. He can denounce his fellows like a Jonah when he has a mind to it. His prose especially is, like so much good prophet's prose, only less apt to fly into a passion of denunciation than into a passion of ideals. He broods calm as a seer in his verse and on his canvases. His prose is often the prose of a controversialist with a lash. Everyone remembers his punishment of Mr Kipling in an "open letter" which he contributed to *The Daily News* during the Ulster crisis, after Mr Kipling had written a shrill, old-maidish poem about "hells declared for those that serve not Rome." If Mr Kipling is sensitive, its blazing nobleness must have disturbed him beyond any other criticism that was ever directed against his work. But A. E. is as bold in prophesying against the country he loves as against the poet who maligned it. In an essay called *Religion and Love* he charges Ireland with sin with an anger possible only to a lover or an enemy. "The home life in Ireland," he declares, "is probably more squalid than with any other people equally prosperous in Europe. The children, begotten without love, fill

more and more the teeming asylums." I quote this not because I entirely agree with it—I doubt whether lovelessness is responsible for nearly as many admissions into Irish asylums as malnutrition and tea—but as an example of A. E.'s preference of the home truth to the sentimental lie in dealing with Irish or any other questions. His scorn of the "made marriage" and the haggling over dowries leads him even to belittle the reputation of Irishwomen for virtue. "A girl, without repining," he says, "will follow her four-legged dowry to the house of a man she may never have spoken twenty words to before her marriage. We praise our women for their virtue, but the general acceptance of the marriage as arranged shows so unemotional, so undesirable a temperament, that it is not to be wondered at. One wonders was there temptation." And he doubts not only whether Irish women are virtuous in any fine sense, but whether the Irish people as a whole deserve their reputation for being a religious and spiritual race.

"It is" (he writes) "the essentially irreligious spirit of Ireland which has come to regard love as an unnecessary emotion and the mingling of the sexes as dangerous. For it is a curious thing that, while we commonly regard ourselves as the most religious people in Europe, the reverse is probably true. The country which has never produced spiritual thinkers or religious teachers of whom men have heard, if we except Berkeley and perhaps the remote Johannes Scotus Erigena, cannot pride itself on its spiritual achievement."

And in the end we are left with the damnation of contemporary Ireland in the sentence:

"Dante had a place in his Inferno for the joyless

souls, and if his conception be true, the population of that circle will be largely modern Irish."

Like many tempestuous prophets, however, A. E. will not permit other people to damn where he himself damns. I have mentioned his castigation of Mr Kipling. He is equally at odds with the realists of the Abbey Theatre who dwell with too loving an insistence on the vices of Ireland. In an essay, entitled *Ideals of the New Rural Society*, he writes:

"Ireland is a horribly melancholy and cynical country. Our literary men and poets, who ought to give us courage, have taken to writing about the Irish as a people who 'went forth to battle, but always fell,' sentimentalising over incompetence instead of invigorating us and liberating us and directing our energies. We have developed a new and clever school of Irish dramatists who say they are holding the mirror up to Irish peasant nature; but they reflect nothing but decadence. They delight in the broken lights of sincerity, the ruffian who beats his wife, the weakling who is unfortunate in love and who goes and drinks himself to death, while the little, decaying country towns are seized with avidity and exhibited on the stage in every kind of decay and human futility and meanness."

Considering A. E.'s own indictments of Irish life, this seems a little unfair. One is also inclined to ask him how he, who is so suspicious of ethical intrusions into the art of painting, can justify himself for demanding these intrusions into the art of literature. Surely the tragic figuration of suffering in Mr Lennox Robinson's play, *The Cross Roads*—the play concerning the wife-beater which A. E. attacks—is a legitimate and even noble aim in imaginative literature.

One feels that Mr. Robinson's sunless realism is the result, not of intellectual malice but of imaginative comprehension and pity. A. E.'s theory of literature, however, will not allow any trafficking with ignoble types. His theory of painting is as unethical as Whistler's: his literary creed is nearer Tolstoy's. In his essay, *Nationality and Cosmopolitanism*, he seems to hope for the coming of an Irish literature which will hold up heroic types for the imitation of the people. "The literature of a people," he believes, "is for ever creating a new soul among its people," and he sees no chance of any good thing coming to Ireland from the pursuit of decadent European models, which only disclose "the old wolfish lust, hiding itself beneath the golden fleece of the spirit." That sentence, however, is a protest not against Mr Robinson but against Mr Yeats, who wrote *The Autumn of the Body* to recommend French examples to the Irish. A. E. will go to school neither to French nor to English literature—at least, so far as he desires a literature of heroic types. As for English literature, he writes:

"English literature has always been more sympathetic with actual beings than with ideal types, and cannot help us much. A man who loves Dickens, for example, may prove to have a great tolerance for the grotesque characters which are the outcome of the social order in England, but he will not be assisted in the conception of a higher humanity; and this is true of very many English writers who lack a fundamental philosophy, and are content to take man as he seems to be for the moment rather than as the pilgrim of eternity—as one who is flesh to-day but who may hereafter prove divine, and who may shine at last like the stars of morning, triumphant among the sons of God."

That passage in a measure implies a criticism of A. E. as well as of Dickens. His own art is inhabited by divine thoughts instead of human beings. Whether in his lyrics or his landscapes, it is the divine rather than the human interests that predominate. He is too much of a visionary to be content with the humours and observations of the realist.

At the same time, it is less the literary critic that speaks in these sentences than the builder and maker of the Golden Age in Ireland. A. E. is a patriot who, amid all his indignation, dreams dreams of Ireland such as Blake dreamed of England. Few voices so eloquent in the field of social prophecy have been heard since Mazzini's and Ruskin's. He summons Irishmen not to middle-class success but to the politics of inspiration.

"The countryside in Ireland" (he declares) "could blossom into as much beauty as the hillsides in mediæval Italy if we could but get rid of our self-mistrust. We have all that any race ever had to inspire them, the heavens overhead, the earth underneath, and the breath of life in our nostrils. I would like to exile the man who would set limits to what we can do, who would take the crown and sceptre from the human will, and say, marking out some petty enterprise as the limit: 'Thus far can we go and no farther, and here shall our life be stayed.'"

Is not the country to be envied in which a hot-gospeller of eggs and turnips (if one may use the phrase without offence) can summon his fellows to the Promised Land in accents like these:

"We in Ireland should not live only from day to day, for the day only, like the beasts in the field, but should think of where all this long cavalcade of the

Gael is tending, and how and in what manner their tents will be pitched in the evening of their generation. A national purpose is the most unconquerable and victorious of all things on earth. It can raise up Babylon from the sands of the desert, and make imperial civilisations spring from a score of huts, and after it has wrought its will it can leave monuments that seem as everlasting a portion of nature as the rocks. The Pyramids and the Sphinx on the sands of Egypt have seemed to humanity for centuries as much a portion of nature as Errigal, or Benbulben, or Slieve Gullion, has seemed a portion of nature to our eyes in Ireland."

A. E.'s prose does not bear the stamp of his genius so indubitably as does his poetry. None the less, it is the prose of a great man, whether he writes on Mr Yeats or G. F. Watts, on the soul of man or the reconstruction of rural society.

II

A. E. is a writer in a curious position. About nine-tenths of those who admire him most passionately are a little uncertain whether at times he is humbugging them or not—whether, indeed, he is not humbugging himself. They are carried away by the large images of his poetry; they are moved by the twilight beauty of his landscapes; they respond to his eloquence as a seer of the co-operative commonwealth. But when it comes to the demi-gods, fairies, spirits or whatever you care to call those plumed and fiery creatures of his vision, all but a few out-and-out disciples smile questioningly at one another. In their hearts they regard these things as the eccentricities of a great man rather than as inhabitants of earth, air or eternity. They

think of them as rather comic, like Blake's vision of the ghost of a flea which he once leaped out of bed to set down on paper. The truth is, in hearing of visions of this kind, most of us are like children hearing a stranger speak a language we do not know. We are amused, as at gibberish, never pausing to reflect that the sense may be in the stranger's speech and the lack of understanding in ourselves. And the more ignorant we are, the more disinclined are we to be seriously inquisitive beyond the tiny circle of our own world. In the proverbs, it is the ignorant man who believes in wonders. In reality, it is more often the ignorant man who laughs at wonders. We are by nature unbelievers in a great part of our being. We even regard our unbelief as a proof that we possess a sense of humour.

In a world in which death and distress are all about us, however, we need a faith as well as a sense of humour; and we cannot afford to dismiss in a flurry of prejudice the faith of any man who writes in good faith. We should be especially foolish to be impatient of the faith of a true poet who comes making us such bounteous offers as A. E. "Sitting in your chair," he assures us, "you can travel farther than ever Columbus travelled, and to lordlier worlds than his eyes have rested on. Are you tired of surfaces? Come with me, and we will bathe in the Fountains of Youth. I can point you the way to El Dorado." This is a cheerful promise, a golden summons. What warrant have we that A. E. is not asking us to chase a will-o'-the-wisp? What warrant have we that he has not been chasing a will-o'-the-wisp himself with the genius of an imaginative man? We can but listen attentively to his story and ponder it, ringing it on our sense of truth like a coin on a counter.

A. E. tells us that his visionary life does not go

back to his infancy. "I never," he declares, "felt a light in childhood which faded in manhood into the common light of day, nor do I believe that childhood is any nearer than age to the vision. . . . I was not conscious in my boyhood of any heaven lying about me." At the same time, we find, in a chapter in *The Candle of Vision*, that while he was still in his teens he was in many respects the visionary that we know to-day. We see him walking along the country roads of Armagh at night with a dream-world in his head: "If I walked across my lawns in darkness, the grasses stirred by my feet would waken to vivid colour and glimmer behind me with a trail of green fire." While he was still only seventeen or eighteen he was already trying to express this mystic dream-world in paint, and "began with much enthusiasm a series of pictures which were to illustrate the history of man from his birth in the Divine Mind, where he glimmered first in the darkness of chaos in vague and monstrous forms, growing ever nigher to the human, to men-beasts and men-birds, until at last the most perfect form, the Divine idea of man, was born in space." In connection with these boyish paintings, A. E. relates an extraordinary experience. As he brooded over one of the pictures, wondering what legend to write beneath it, he began to feel "like one who is in a dark room and hears the breathing of another creature," and something whispered to him, "Call it 'The Birth of Æon.'" About a fortnight later, "A. E." was in the National Library in Dublin waiting for the attendant to give him a book, when his eye fell on a volume that was lying open on a table. It was a dictionary of religion, and the first word that caught his eye was "Æon," and "it was explained as a word used by the Gnostics to designate the first created beings." Most people, as they read this,

will murmur something about "coincidence"—a blesseder word than "Mesopotamia" itself. A. E., however, trembled at his discovery, and so great was the impression it made upon him that he has ever since called himself by the first two letters of the mysterious word, "Æon." He intended, we are told, to take "Æon" as a pseudonym, but a printer, finding his handwriting not easy to decipher, printed only the first two letters, with a question-mark for the rest. A. E., in his proof, deleted the question-mark, and left "A. E."—or rather, "Æ"—standing. Thus we see that even his mysterious initials are a sort of record of strange experiences belonging to the same world from which came the voices to Joan of Arc.

Nor did this experience stand alone. A. E. gives us an account of a considerable number of visions, some of them prophetic, some of them explicable by thought-transference, which came to him in those early years. He began then to cultivate what may be called the habit of vision. For this, one is interested to learn, he believes that no special genius is needed. "Genius!" he exclaims. "There is no stinting of this by the keeper of the Treasure House. It is not bestowed, but it is won. Yon man of heavy soul might if he willed play upon the lyre of Apollo, that drunkard be god-intoxicated." He does not pretend, however, that the power of evocation, the mastery of one's vision, comes without labour. He tells us how he himself set to work to attain mastery over the will. "I would choose some mental object, an abstraction of form, and strive to hold my mind fixed on it in unwearying concentration, so that not for a moment, not for an instant, would the concentration slacken. It is an exercise this, a training for higher adventures of the soul: it is no light labour. The ploughman's cleaving the furrows is

easier by far. Five minutes of this effort will at first leave us trembling as at the close of a laborious day." A. E.'s theory is that the body fights its hardest to suppress the spirit's attempt to become free. "Empires do not send legions so quickly to frustrate revolt as all that is mortal in us hurries along nerve, artery, and every highway of the body to beset the soul." At first, he tells us, his vision sometimes made him vain; he was like a person who at the rising of the sun would say: "This glory is mine." But he always paid the penalty for such vain self-deceptions. "By the sudden uprising of such vanities in the midst of vision I was often outcast." He maintains, indeed, that those who make use of the higher powers of vision for selfish ends are in grave peril. "Woe to him who awakens it before he has purified his being of selfishness, for it will turn downwards and vitalise his darker passions and awaken strange frenzies and inextinguishable desires. The turning earthward of that heaven-born power is the sin against the Holy Breath, for that fire which leaps upon us with the ecstasy of contemplation of Deity is the Holy Breath, the power which can carry us from earth to heaven."

A. E.'s theology is not always easy to make out. At times he seems to be a polytheist, but he would probably deny that he was more of a polytheist than a believer in the Trinity. Like Mr Wells, indeed, he appears to believe in the Trinity with a difference, and to associate the God man may know especially with this earth man does know. The object of his last philosophic book, he says, is to "bring back thought to that Being whom the ancient seers worshipped as Deity. I believe," he adds, "that most of what was said of God was in reality said of that spirit whose body is earth." At the same time, it is

not in the visible earth that A. E. finds the vision of reality. He believes with Plato that "the earth is not all what the geographers suppose it to be." We live in a world of shadows or reflections. Another world permeates and surrounds our own, populous with immortal presences. A. E. believes that in ecstasy, vision and dreams we actually see these presences. He believes that imagination is but a means of recovering our lost citizenship and consciousness of that starry world. "I am convinced that all poetry is, as Emerson said, first written in the heavens." Did not Blake also claim that the authors of his poems were in eternity and that his books were the delight of archangels?

What, however, is the nature of this unseen world, which is as objectively real as the present world? A. E. apparently believes in the objective reality even of those mocking faces that sometimes appear to the fancy when one has closed one's eyes for sleep. He believes that in dreams and in imagination and in intuition the soul visits a many-coloured world to which the normal senses are blind, and the explanations of Freud seem to him as absurd as would be the report of a dull dissector on the beauty of Cleopatra. Not that A. E. has a single explanation for all psychic phenomena. Many of them he would attribute, for instance, to the soul's getting into touch with the memory of the earth. Like William James, he raises the question whether there may not be a great stored-up earth-memory; and he thinks that he himself has wrung some of its secrets from it through intuition. One of the most startling chapters he has written is that called "The Language of the Gods," in which he relates how by intense meditation he sought to discover the roots of speech as man first received them in the original names of things from the gods. He describes

how he used to meditate over each letter of the alphabet in order to discover its secret. "No doubt the sanity of the boy who walked about the roads at night more than thirty years ago, murmuring letters to himself with the reverence of a mystic murmuring the ineffable name, might have been questioned by anyone who knew that he was trying to put himself in the place of his Aryan ancestors." It may be doubted whether the prosaic will be reassured by the chapter in which they are told that H is "the sound correspondence of Heat," and that it has affinity with the colour orange, or that "Z represents the multiplication, division or begetting of organism from organism." Even those whom the account of the language of the gods and the interpretation of the Celtic myths merely bewilder, however, will find such a wealth of poetic image and of noble fantasy in A. E.'s writings that rapture will alternate with puzzlement as they read. After all, did not a fine English poet behold the traffic of Jacob's ladder pitched between heaven and Charing Cross? A. E. is an Irishman who has seen the same overwhelming vision in the streets of Dublin.

CHAPTER XXI

VOICES OF THE NEW IRELAND: (4) T. M. KETTLE

"AT least *we* are stylists," declared Kettle in a mood of youthful arrogance in *The Nationist*—a little weekly paper which he edited in Dublin at the outset of his career. This was not a mere boast—it was a confession of faith. He loved style as he loved philosophy. They were the two stars which for him lightened the gloom of a disastrous world. He cultivated style in his conversation; he achieved it, as everybody who has read *The Day's Burden* knows, in his prose. He was one of those rare men whose conversation does not begin to pall at three o'clock in the morning. His true place was among the wits at an eighteenth-century table or, better still, in a Paris café among extravagant, proud and religious Bohemians, such as Villiers de l'Isle Adam. In so far as he belonged to the modern world, it was to the world created by Mr Chesterton and Mr Belloc—the world of laughing, quaffing knights of the Holy Ghost. He could, on the same evening, live for the hour like an epicurean and meditate on eternity like a monk. He was not, however, entirely of the world of Mr Chesterton and Mr Belloc. His laughter had not the note of boisterous triumph which one associates with theirs. It was the laughter of a man who seemed to have wrapped himself in sorrows. He gave one the impression of a man of strong nature but of sorrowful will. He never doubted that life was a tragedy. He demanded of it, however,

that it should be a well-written tragedy, with wit flashing out of the darkest thunder-clouds, and with a constant recurrence of good lines for such doomed figures as were to perish in the fifth act. "Good lines and a timely exit"—we find the phrase and the philosophy in one of his essays in *The Day's Burden*.

In his posthumous book, *The Ways of War*, we see that Kettle's sense of tragedy was tempered not merely by his artist's love of style but by his political idealist's love of justice and by his Christian faith. His melancholy was not the melancholy of a paralysed spectator. He had the large hand of a fighter. He did not resign himself to the world's failure. He despaired of Europe infinitely less than he despaired of himself. *The Ways of War* is the cry of indignation of a good European against a monstrous outrage. It is a protest that is in itself a fine action. It is a protest, as everybody knows, that also shaped itself in action, in the commoner sense of the word. For Kettle gave his life as well as his rhetoric to the defence of Europe against "the barbarians" and he fell at Ginchy, a man of words splendidly transformed into a man of deeds. It is not that he ever enjoyed the soldier's life for its own sake. Who in these days does? For him the war had degraded Europe into "a sort of malign middle term between a lunatic asylum and a butcher's stall." He believed, however, that Germany had gone crusading on behalf of the Gospel of the Devil, and that it was the part (as he would have put it) of plain Christian men to unite and overwhelm this Mad Mullah of murder. He was one of those Irish Nationalists who held from the first that, even if England had played the part of Prussia in Ireland for seven centuries, Prussia was at this new turn of events the sinister apostle and swordsman of

Imperialism, and that to fight against Prussia was to fight for the rights and the liberties of nations. By far the greater part of Ireland may be said to have taken that view at the beginning of the war. It required only the imaginative gesture, the just word, the handsome deed on the part of Mr Asquith and English statesmen in general, to perpetuate and strengthen this attitude and to inaugurate the first year of friendship in the relations between England and Ireland. But English statesmen, though they loudly applauded Mr Redmond for stretching out the hand of friendship, did not stretch out a hand in response—they thought their cheers were enough, and nervelessly surrendered to the grip of Sir Edward Carson. They shilly-shallied even over the formality of putting the Home Rule Bill on the Statute Book. As for putting it into operation, they seem never to have been struck by the common-sense reflection that an England setting out to fight for the liberty of small nations ought first of all to strike off the manacles from a small nation she herself had persistently wronged. To refuse to do so was, as it turned out, not only to poison the moral atmosphere of England ; it was to change enthusiasm into anger and cynicism in Ireland and to belittle the cause of the Allies in America and afterwards with the Russian democracy.

Kettle, who at the outbreak of the war was in Belgium buying arms for the Nationalists, and who remained there as war correspondent for *The Daily News*, wrote from Brussels an appeal to the English people to do the generous thing in Ireland at a crisis at which generosity had become the first duty of man. He wrote :

" Here at the opening of this vast and bloody epic, Great Britain is right with the conscience of Europe.

It is assumed that she has reconciled Ireland. A reconciled Ireland is ready to march side by side with her to any desperate trial. And suddenly the lawyer, with the Dublin accent, who had been the chief architect of destruction in the whole Empire, and who was thought to have come to reason, proposes for Ireland what I can only call a Prussian programme. England goes to fight for liberty in Europe and for Junkerdom in Ireland. It is incredible. Were it to come true it would become utterly impossible to act on Mr Redmond's speech. Another dream would have gone down into the abyss. Ireland wounded anew would turn sullenly from you. Is that what a sound Tory ought to desire? Will Tory England, enlightened at last as to the real attitude of Ireland, allow such a fatal crime to be committed?"

Unhappily, Sir Edward Carson had his way—long enough at least, in Kettle's phrase, to "bedevil the whole situation." And what Sir Edward left undone by way of bedevilment the War Office and Dublin Castle did with a will. In the result, Ireland, or a great part of it, as Kettle foretold, turned sullenly away. Any other people with ordinary human susceptibilities would have done the same thing in the same circumstances. Some people are always trying to explain Ireland as though she were a puzzle among the nations. There is nothing the matter with Ireland except human nature. If you prick her she will bleed.

If Tom Kettle himself did not "turn away" it was largely because he was more imaginative, more travelled, more European in interests than the majority of his countrymen. He never lost sight of the fact that the civil war in Europe was a fight between right and wrong, even though it was not a

fight between one side wholly white and another side wholly black. Being a sinner himself, he recognised that, at the best of times, one has to fight by the side of sinners against sin. England, Ireland, France, Belgium—they were all, like Germany, models of imperfection. But of Germany alone could it be said that "she stood for the gospel of force and the sacrament of cruelty." Prussia, unlike her fellow-nations, had, as Kettle said, "adopted her vice as her highest virtue. Her philosophy did not correct her appetites, it canonised them." "What is the Devil's Gospel?" he asks again, and answers:

"I take it that the three main articles are violence, intellect, and a certain malign splendour of domination. If that is the formula of the Courts of Hell, it is certainly the formula of Prussianism."

Nietzsche's writings he sums up as "a long-drawn-out Metaphysics of Bullying." On another page he speaks of him as "that sinister Quixote who made cruelty his sacrament, and who was yet so humanly dear in some of his moods." He does full justice to the splendour as well as the darker aspects of Nietzsche. It is of him that he writes:

"Not since Lucifer was so much light used to dark ends. Not since Diana was great in Ephesus were such beautiful images cast or carven in the service of a false worship. He made German dance as before him only Heine had done.

"'I have an idea,' he wrote, 'that with Zarathustra I have brought the German language to its point of perfection.'

"The boast is probably true. The devil was always a good stylist, and it is not inappropriate that when

his gospel is at its worst, his prose should be at its best."

Kettle could not endure Nietzscheanism in the ugliness of action in spite of the beauty of its prose. What he saw in Belgium led him on his way home through England to offer his services to the War Office in any capacity in which it could use him. He believed in punishment almost flamboyantly. My own blood is too pale to respond to everything he wrote in those days. But one sympathised with his indignant scorn of that form of well-meaning dishonesty which had rather believe the tortured Belgians liars than the torturing Germans murderers. To those who would not accept the evidence of German atrocities in Belgium he ironically replied:

"If you come, during time of war, upon a civilian, hanging by the neck, with his hands tied behind his back, and a fire burning under him, the theory of suicide or accident does not seem to embrace the full scope of the fact."

The Ways of War is not a gentle book. It is passionate and denunciatory in its oratory. Kettle was a pacifist in that he hated war. But he was aggressive against aggression. "There are no 'inevitable wars,'" he retorted to militarists and determinists alike. "Or, rather, the only war inevitable is a war against aggression, and aggression itself is never inevitable." Hence he rained heavy blows both upon the peace-at-any-price party and upon those who loved war as anything except the most awful means of justice. His last essay, "Trade or Honour?", is noble thunder against those who degraded a war for righteousness into a war for markets. Mrs Kettle quotes some of his letters

from the trenches in which his passionate hatred of war is expressed with the intensity of a religious faith. You cannot hate Prussianism, he said, unless you hate war. He did not lose his wit and gaiety, however, even in the midst of blood and wounds and rats and mud and the obscene things of the trenches, as we see in the sketch called "Rhapsody on Rats." This is a fantasy on the trenches—Ratavia, as he called them, in respect of their rat inhabitants. "Ratavia," he wrote—

"Ratavia, as one may designate it, resembles China in that there has never been a census of its population: but that it approximates to the mathematically infinite."

And from the rats in the trenches he proceeds to a fine satiric fable on the rat-Kaiser:

"Kaiser Wilhelm, whose resemblance to a rat has been too little noticed—you have but to take the wax off his moustache and allow it to droop—was seated in his ugly palace at Potsdam, considering his ultimatum to Serbia, when there suddenly appeared before him, down the chimney or out of some diplomatic orifice in the panelling, a Rat, the master and pattern of all rats. 'Majesty!' said he, 'I am come to offer you my aid in this war which you are planning. As you are the Emperor of all the Germans, so am I the Emperor of all the Rats. Our interests coincide.'

"They conferred together very shrewdly and struck an alliance. 'Good!' said his Majesty, slapping his thigh. 'It is decided. We are with-one-another-firmly-united. The war will begin forthwith.'

"So the great quintessential Super-Rat, the Rattish *Ding an sich*, left to mobilise his forces, and the

Kaiser drew over a sheet of paper and wrote the magical black word that unlocks Hell. And the great Rat called in his Austria, which is the louse, and his Turkey, which is the sand-flea, and his Bulgaria, which is that porter of poison the fly. So the battle was joined between the clean and the obscene.

"It must be said for the Kaiser that with this one ally he kept faith. Ratavia has increased enormously in population and prosperity. It has suffered from no menace of famine, for Wilhelm, the faith-keeper, has even sacrificed his own subjects generously in order to avert that calamity.

"But the end is not yet. The Emperor of the Rats will come once again to Potsdam.

"'Majesty!' he will say. 'I am a student of Treitschke, who teaches that an alliance is to be kept by the stronger of two associates only as long as his profit lies that way.' And as Majesty, shrivelled, decaying with the pallor of death on him, trembles in his chair, the great Rat will add: 'I propose to annex you.'"

Well, the Kaiser is gone now, and other Kaisers of other races have taken his place. The war for the freedom of the world turned out not to be a war for the freedom of Ireland after all. Kettle and many another Irish patriot are quiet in their graves, and Mr Lloyd George remains alive and vocal to commit the supreme infamy of denying that Ireland is a nation.

Kettle was one of those men of whom it may be said that they are more wonderful than anything they write. But everything he wrote bears clearly enough the signature of a fine personality, a valiant soldier, a writer with just that swagger of phrase that makes old truths young again and worn topics

bright as a new penny. His gospel lives after him. One may disagree with it in certain details and in certain of the ways in which Kettle himself applied it. But his ideal of an Ireland inhabited not only by good Irishmen but by good Europeans gives us, I believe, a platform upon which the Sinn Feiner and the Orangeman can unite, and Ireland take her place among the free peoples of the world with universal acclamation.

CHAPTER XXII

VOICES OF THE NEW IRELAND: (5) DORA SIGERSON

DORA SIGERSON was fortunate in the praise of poets. Meredith spoke of "the eternal poet in that wise creature"; Swinburne wrote of her with admiration; Francis Thompson applauded her freshness and power. And I have heard the greatest of living poets speaking with enthusiasm of the beauty of her verse. Like many of the women who have written good poetry, she found in poetry not so much a profession as a delight. She achieved art through artlessness. She was a poet born, not made. "She was so full of artistic impulse and achievement of many kinds," Katharine Tynan writes in the memoir which prefaces *The Sad Years*—". . . and she arrived at so much art without any apprenticeship, that the word 'genius' seems not inapplicable to her. . . . The gifts came to her out of the air, so to speak; real gifts and nothing acquired." She was in one sense an artist during all her waking hours. She was restlessly occupied in the task of making beautiful things, whether in her studio, in her garden or at her desk. But there is a quality of freshness in her poems that, as one reads them, makes one feel that she wrote them as naturally as she talked, without pause, blot or afterthought. Nature, indeed, had marked her out for a poet. Her face, Katharine Tynan writes, describing her first meeting with her, "had some curious suggestion of the Greek Hermes. . . . She was singularly beautiful, with some strange

hint of storm in her young beauty. . . . She was full of *joie de vivre*, despite the hint of tragedy in her beauty. She did madcap things." There, in four sentences, you have the portrait of an indubitable poet, impulsive, romantic, sensitive, dark and sunny.

The Sad Years, however, the book of verse which contains this portrait and which may be regarded as the author's poetical bequest to her country, is something more than a revelation of a poet's temperament. It is a revelation of a poet's heart in the presence of suffering and death. Mrs Shorter, we are told by Katharine Tynan, was from her girlhood a friend of lost dogs. When the two young poets used to wander in the streets of Dublin together, they were constantly picking up "waifs and strays of forlorn doghood," so that the street-boys used to shout jeeringly after them: "Go on! wid yer grand hats, and ye to be starvin' yer dog!" When the European War broke out a heart that had been touched with pity for lost dogs was now all but overwhelmed with pity for a lost humanity; and in "Progress," "The Road of the Refugees" and "An Old Proverb" we find a bitter anguish of pity pouring itself out—a bitter anger of pity, one might almost say, at sight of the implacable earth and her victims:

> "Lo! I am athirst," sighed the brown earth,
> "Grant me red wine to spend."
> "As it was in the beginning," said the great hills,
> "And shall be to the end."

A new mood came to Mrs Shorter after the Dublin rebellion of Easter week, 1916. The shooting and hanging of the Sinn Fein leaders tortured her as the agony of Belgium had tortured other sensitive spirits earlier in the war. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that she received her death-sentence when Pearse and Connolly were given

theirs. Many people will question the reasonableness of her sufferings as we find them passionately articulate in *The Sad Years*. The Irish are only human beings, however: they object to seeing their fellow-countrymen put to death by strangers. Mrs Shorter, in her passion of anger and sorrow, was not a solitary and abnormal figure. She became the prophet, as it were, of the passion of a people. Those who know anything about human nature in politics foresaw the results that would follow from the execution of the insurgent leaders. They warned the statesmen and the soldiers that to shoot the leaders would, instead of emphasising and attesting their failure, exalt them into national figures. Ireland has often been accused of weeping too persistently over her dead. How infatuated were those statesmen who gave her new dead to weep over! Mrs Shorter more than anyone else has sung the national lament over the dead insurgents. No poem has been written which expresses the passion of sorrow and wild hope over the graves of the dead with the same power and beauty as "The Dead Soldier." Passion such as this is beyond argument. In politics, we may either allow ourselves to be swept along by it or we may contend violently against it. In literature, we have simply to accept it as a part of nature. Even those who have no sympathy with the author's political point of view will find it difficult to remain unaffected while reading this poem:

> Look! they come, the triumphant army!
> Over yon hill see their weapons peeping.
> Still I spoke not, but my wheel sent turning;
> I closed my eyes, for my heart was weeping,
> My heart was weeping for a dead soldier.
>
> "Who is he who looks towards me?"
> "'Tis no man, but a gay flag flying."

Red was his mouth and his white brow thoughtful,
Blue his eyes—how my soul is crying,
My soul is crying for a dead soldier.

"Kneel ye down, lest your eyes should dare them.
Kneel ye down and your beads be saying."
"Lord, on their heads Thy wrath deliver."
This is the prayer that my lips are praying,
My heart is praying for a dead soldier.

Best cheer the path of the men victorious,
For he is dead and his blade lies broken.
His march is far where no aid can follow,
And for his people he left no token;
He left no token, the dead soldier.

The way of the sword a man can follow,
See the young child with his gold hair gleaming.
When falls the oak must the acorn perish?
He lifts the blade and his eyes are dreaming;
He dreams the dream of the dead soldier.

Every broken and defeated people in Europe has poetry expressing just such passions.

It would be misleading to suggest, however, that *The Sad Years* is, in the conventional sense of the word, a volume of patriotic poetry. Patriotic poetry, as a rule, is rhetorical propaganda rather than poetry. It expresses the passions of the mob or a public meeting rather than of the individual soul. Mrs Shorter's poems are the confessions of her own soul. The sadness is a personal sadness. Their joyousness is a personal joyousness. For there is a real joyousness behind all the sorrow in the poems. No one could have loved more ardently, more happily this world of birds and flowers:

The young bird's broken tune,
The larkspur gold and blue.

At the same time, Mrs Shorter sees all these things with the intensity of one who is bidding them farewell.

She sees in the patchwork quilt of the flowers a coverlet for her own narrow bed, and in the tree uprooted the image of her release. The birds, too, taking flight to the south in winter, she loves and envies as fellow-exiles who have the liberty to return home when they will. She looks at all nature wistfully, mournfully, half as a lover, half as a stranger. In the midst of lovely things there is still cause for repining:

> I shall rest no more on the fragrant mosses
> Under great trees where the green bough tosses
> Scents of the lime; and the wild rose, flinging
> Sweets to the breeze with their censer swinging.
> I shall count no more, as I linger lazy
> Deep in the mead, from the pink-tipped daisy,
> "Who loves me well, and who leaves me lonely?
> Who loves me not, and who loves me only?"

For all their melancholy, however, these lines are an expression of delight in the visible world. And one finds evidence of this delight on every page of *The Sad Years*. No one but a lover of wild things could have written about the swallows that build on the gable-ends of the cottage as Dora Sigerson has done:

> On its wall the swallows' house, who can find its secret door?
> Such a cunning nursery, made with Eastern art.
> I can hear the baby ones, in their first, swift, troubled flight,
> Giving little frightened cries as they swoop and dart.
>
> And I hear the swallow-folk telling tales of foreign climes,
> In a low sweet lullaby long before the day.
> Little brothers of the wind, children of the summer time,
> Lovers of the summer sky, swift you fly away!

In one of her most beautiful poems, indeed, it is to nature that she turns as the great consoler. "The Comforters" is, in my opinion, one of those poems which will pass from anthology to anthology in

future years. Such a poem as "The Comforters" will, better than any critical comment, announce the noble quality of Mrs Shorter's gifts:

When I crept over the hill, broken with tears,
When I crouched down on the grass, dumb in despair,
I heard the soft croon of the wind bend to my ears,
I felt the light kiss of the wind touching my hair.

When I stood lone on the height my sorrow did speak,
As I went down the hill, I cried and I cried,
The soft little hands of the rain stroking my cheek,
The kind little feet of the rain ran by my side.

When I went to thy grave, broken with tears,
When I crouched down in the grass, dumb in despair,
I heard the sweet croon of the wind soft in my ears,
I felt the kind lips of the wind touching my hair.

When I stood lone by thy cross, sorrow did speak.
When I went down the long hill, I cried and I cried.
The soft little hands of the rain stroked my pale cheek,
The kind little feet of the rain ran by my side.

Katharine Tynan, in writing of Mrs Shorter's poetry, has made use of the phrase, "beautiful poetry, essential poetry, always with a passionate emotion to give it wings." That is admirably said. There is nothing of objective Parnassianism in Mrs Shorter's work. She belongs to the singers rather than the phrase-makers among the poets. Her lyrics are cries of the heart, tender, passionate, romantic. In the result, hers is poetry of a sort to which neither artists nor simple people can remain indifferent. Much of the finest of her work is in *The Sad Years*. Nothing that she wrote, I fancy, is more certain to survive than "The Comforters," "The Dead Soldier" or "The Black Horseman."

CHAPTER XXIII

COMMON-SENSE ABOUT THE LITTLE NATIONS

At the beginning of the war all the books were full of talk about the small nations. And by a small nation most people meant not a nation of diminished area so much as a nation of diminished liberties. Their list of the little nations included not only Belgium, which is hardly bigger than Ulster, but Poland, which is one of the largest countries in Europe. They idealised subject peoples in the mass. They felt that they were engaged in a crusade, and they had for every oppressed nation something of the same feeling that the old Crusaders had for the Holy Sepulchre. The small nations shone in the reflected glory of the ideal of the hour. People did not exactly ignore the greater nations such as England and France. But they did not glow about them in the same way as they glowed about Belgium and Serbia. One did not feel that the great nations stood in the same degree in need of one's championship. They were strong enough to look after themselves—strong enough even to stand criticism. After Mr Bottomley's first strangled scream of "To Hell with Serbia!" no Englishman would have dreamed of uttering a harsh word in public about Serbia, any more than a knight would have dreamed of belittling a lady whom he was rescuing from the clutches of an ogre. To a knight every lady who had to be rescued was a fair lady. Later on, if he married her and settled down, he

might discover that she was a shrew, and, following the fashion of the time, might even claim the right to beat her. But in the jubilee of his chivalry there was no room for the harsh prose of realism. The English and French peoples hurried to the rescue of Belgium in just such a temper of romantic chivalry. Never in history had the small nations been set on such a pedestal. They were beautiful and spotless as the virtuous figures in an allegory. They were almost too good to be true except on Sunday. Germany through Bernhardi had said that weak nations have no right to exist, and that to become the prey of the stronger is their natural destiny. To many English and French people this seemed to be the accursed lie that caused the war. They immediately proclaimed the protection of the rights of small nations to be the chief constructive ideal for which they were fighting. Even the destruction of Prussian militarism was but a means to this great end. Sir Edward Carson himself became a furious Nationalist—for Serbia. Mr Herbert Fisher, not foreseeing that he would one day vote for the conscription of the manhood of a small nation without its consent, wrote an admirable pamphlet showing how glorious a contribution the small countries had made to the arts and civilisation of Europe. *The Times* created a genuine sense of horror in the breasts of many people when it protested that England had excellent motives of self-interest for going into the war, and would have had to go in even if Belgium had not been invaded. The average Englishman felt that, so far as he individually was concerned, this was doubtful. He was roused to a passion of indignation against Germany, not by the potential wrongs of England but by the actual wrongs of Belgium. Then, as so often happens, the rescuer fell in love with the rescued. The chief

event of the first year of the war, indeed, may be said to have been that Europe fell head over ears in love with the little nations, for which a few months before she had hardly cared a penny.

This mood of romance was bound to lead to disillusion. Mr Shaw had shocked the romantic by expressing his dislike of small nations as nuisances on the ground that they are a standing temptation to the great Empires to come and steal them. Other people soon began to suspect the small nations of being nuisances, though for quite different reasons. First they discovered that Belgium was a nation not of angels but of human beings. That discovery came as a great blow. Sentimental people had not been prepared for the fact that the population of Belgium, like that of every other country in Europe, contained thieves, prostitutes, thimbleriggers and dyspeptics, as well as pious, poetic and good-natured men and women. Then there came queer tidings from Montenegro. Then Greece seemed to behave rather queerly. Then there was the Sinn Fein insurrection in Dublin. Then the Georgians were known to be not only fighting nobly for the Allies in the army of Russia but to possess a pro-German party, like the Irish, and even to have a few of their extremists pleading their cause in Berlin. Then the Ukraine, having received a loan from France to defeat the Russian Revolution, threw itself into the still more anti-revolutionary arms of Germany. Then the Poles, like the Georgians, were known to have a party that looked to Germany for liberty as well as a party that looked to the Allies. Then Finland, fearing red ruin, permitted itself to become practically the ally of Germany. It is hardly to be wondered at that many a sentimentalist who had undergone a sudden conversion to the cause of small nations in the early days of the war began to wonder

whether he had not, in the phrase of Lord Salisbury, backed the wrong horse. During the last few months, indeed, I have seen articles in various papers urging that the small nations have been one of the disappointments of the war. They have undoubtedly been a disappointment to the sentimentalist who never took the trouble to understand their point of view and judged them only by the test whether they fell in with his. The sentimentalist is an egoist in disguise. He enjoys a sort of vanity of virtue. He is a despot of sounding words, and easily persuades himself that those who interfere with his plans are the enemies of God. His life is bound to be a continual disappointment because he does not accept the conditions of human nature or realise that all human beings and all nations are fallible, and that their policies and opinions fluctuate from day to day. He demands the flattery of assent, not an exchange of opinions among equals. He will himself be the first to turn and rend one of his beneficiaries who does not seem to be sufficiently grateful. Though he may not understand human nature, he has his share of it.

Luckily, there is plenty of common-sense and idealism as well as sentimentality in the modern democracy. And it is on common-sense and idealism, not on sentimentality, that the future of the small nations depends. There is no need to pretend to ourselves that the small nations are nobler than the great nations. They are not. Russia and France and England have no need to feel gross and vulgar and self-seeking in comparison with Poland and Belgium and Ireland. They have been more successful, but not necessarily more prone to wickedness. If we rejoice to see Bohemia free from Austria, it is not because she is better than Austria, but because she is different from Austria. The small nations,

like the great nations, have each of them a sufficient retinue of vices to justify a long and damning indictment. But each of them has also, assuredly, a sufficient core of virtue to justify the daring experiment of liberty. Some of them we may like; some of them we may dislike. Some may be given to vices to which we ourselves feel no inclination, and which therefore fill us with peculiar loathing. The London clubman, for instance, never having been tempted to commit an agrarian crime, is firmly persuaded that it is something far blacker than adultery or profiteering. He has lived in circumstances in which it would have been unsafe to be a pro-German: he never asks himself whether, if he had been a Finn, he might not have found pro-Germanism a more tempting vice. In any case, if we are concerned for the liberty of the world, we shall not ask a small nation to produce its good-conduct card or its political confession of faith before setting it free. To liberate a small nation simply because one approves of it is mere whimsicality. Nations, like human beings, must be made free, not in any arbitrariness of the affections but because the conscience of the modern world is revolted by the denial of freedom. Even though every small nation in Europe had taken the part of Germany in the present war—and, as a matter of fact, the great mass of the small nations from the Shannon to the Volga threw their weight into the scale on the side of the Allies—it would still be entitled to its freedom, just as an individual voter is entitled to freedom, whether he voted Conservative, Liberal or Labour at the last election. President Wilson has said that it is not enough to be just to the nations to which we wish to be just. We must be just even to the nations that irritate us and that we actively dislike.

All that I have written is sufficiently obvious in

logic. It is not, unfortunately, regarded as obvious in practical politics. In practical politics we are often guided by prejudice rather than reason, and an impatient phrase, such as "Beastly little nations!" may carry more weight than a library of political philosophy. Hence it is vitally important that we should keep clear before us the true reasons for securing to every small nation the right to choose its own way of life. The fact that the Czechs—or some of them—have behaved well has no more to do with the case for the small nations than the fact that the Finns—or some of them—have behaved badly. The case for the small nations is merely, as Emile Boutroux, the philosopher, pointed out at the beginning of the war, a logical development of the liberating principles of the French Revolution. Writing on the French theory of nationality, Boutroux then said: "Basing its deductions on the Hellenic and Christian conception of human nature, the Declaration of 1789 had proclaimed, as also had America, that men are born free, and equal in their rights, and that they continue so. The French theory of nationality consists in extending to nations that which, in this maxim, is affirmed of individuals." Nations, in other words, have the same claim to freedom and equality as men have. This conception of nations as persons is the only possible alternative to the theory of the Prussians, who "substitute hierarchy in the place of equality between nations, and posit the existence of a head nation whose mission it is to dominate the rest and assign to them their place and function in the universe." The Prussian theory is one that for the moment stinks in the nostrils of the world. But it is a theory that has at one time or another attracted most of the great nations and many great and little men. Mr Kipling was a prophet of "head-nationism," as surely

as Bernhardi. The Peace will fail to bring peace to the world unless it results in the defeat not only of Prussia but this ever so enticing Prussian ideal. The Peace should, as President Wilson and Mr Asquith have again and again said, be founded on the equal right of every nation, great and small, to choose its own way of life and to contribute the gift of its own peculiar genius unhampered to the common store of the world's civilisation. If we do not get this peace, then we shall not get peace at all, but the seedbed of future war. The seed of a great plague may be sown in a tiny swamp, and the seed of a great war may be sown in a tiny nation. Hence it behoves us at least to be afraid to be unjust. That is the common-sense position with regard to the small nations, and luckily it points in the same direction as idealism.

CHAPTER XXIV

EPILOGUE

When Mr Will Thorne returned from a visit to Russia during the Kerensky revolution, he said that the British delegates were being constantly met with the question: "What about Ireland?" Englishmen who visited Scandinavia during the war came back with the same story. And at the present moment apparently the inevitable question greets the Englishman almost everywhere he goes in America. English newspaper correspondents send home beseeching messages, asking their government to do something to "counteract the anti-British propaganda and state the British case." They seem all to be agreed on one point, that there exists a powerful British case for refusing Irishmen the right to choose their own rulers—a case that, if properly stated, would convince any fair-minded man. Americans, they tell us pathetically, have heard only one side of the question. This, in point of fact, is not true. Money has been spent on anti-Irish propaganda as well as on pro-Irish propaganda in America—probably, a great deal more money. A futile censorship has even done what it could to prevent the facts about Ireland from reaching America. This, from the official point of view, is intelligible enough. There is no possible answer to the facts. The only hope is to silence them. There is, as regards Ireland, simply no "British case" which an honest man can state. Even an almost fanatical pro-Englishman like

myself has been unable to discover one. There are, in one sense, two sides to every question. Even in a criminal case there is the side of the prosecution and the side of the defence. This does not mean, however, that both sides equally have a case that would impress honest men. The case of the man accused of housebreaking is hopeless unless he can prove either that housebreaking is a good thing or that he himself is not guilty of it. England in Ireland is admittedly in the position of a housebreaker. There is no defence except that the thing has become a habit. Strategical reasons may have been some excuse in the old days before men fought to set the world free from Prussianism. Germany's possession of Alsace-Lorraine and her designs on the coast of Flanders were, it will be remembered, both justified by strategic reasons. The moral sense of the world will no longer endure strategic reasons as an excuse for Imperial crimes. Men have come to see that they have to choose between making the world safe for strategy and making the world safe for democracy.

Anti-Irish propagandists, realising this advance in the moral sense of mankind, for the most part fall back on the pretence that English statesman are only too anxious to give Ireland what she wants, but that Irishmen cannot agree among themselves and that Ulster blocks the way. As a matter of fact, no English statesman has ever offered Ireland anything approaching self-determination. Mr Lloyd George has declared that England will never consent to the establishment of an Irish Republic, however much Irishmen desire it, and he warned the Convention which sat under the presidency of Sir Horace Plunkett that it must not even ask for Dominion Home Rule. It was not in the name of Ulster but in the name of England that he denied the right of Ireland to be an independent republic. It is

ridiculous then to pretend that Irishmen have only to agree among themselves in order to get whatever they want. Thousands of individual Englishmen are, I know, willing and even anxious to grant Ireland the same rights of self-determination as England itself possesses. But no English statesman has shown himself to be so as yet. Irish internal differences and the Ulster difficulty, on the contrary, so far from being causes of regret to the Cabinet Minister, are exceedingly welcome pretexts which enable him to feel moral and just in continuing to govern Ireland against its will. Mr Lloyd George was recently asked whether he would not submit the question of the future government of Ireland to an Irish referendum. He declared that this was impossible, owing to the difficulty of deciding upon the area for the referendum. Strange to say, he and his cabinet colleagues found no difficulty three years earlier in deciding upon the area to be represented at the bogus convention. The area was all Ireland. Statesmen merely invent difficulties of this kind as a means of denying to Irishmen the rights conceded to every other nation of white men. But, even if we were to admit—which one cannot honestly do—that the Irish question is beyond the capacity of straightforward English statesmanship to solve, the damning fact remains that English statesmen have steadily refused to allow anyone else to solve it for them. Not only have they refused to allow Irishmen themselves to solve it, but they have refused to allow the question to go before either the Peace Conference or a Conference of the Premiers and statesmen of the British Empire. As regards its submission to the Peace Conference, they were deaf alike to the demands of the Sinn Feiners and to the appeal of the Irish soldiers who fought in the British Army in the war against Germany. The enemies of Ireland

like to pretend that the only Irishmen who desire a national status for their country among the free peoples of the world are moved by anti-British animus. This is the falsest of calumnies. That the Irish demand for self-determination is no mere anti-English clamour is shown by such a document as the official leaflet of the Irish Nationalist Veterans' Association, in support of Ireland's appeal to the Peace Conference. [I quote it in full on the next page.]

The widow of Willie Redmond, the widow of Lieut. T. M. Kettle, Captain W. A. Redmond, D.S.O., and Captain Stephen Gwynn were among the signatories to this significant appeal. Their conception of Irish freedom, no doubt, differs substantially from that of the Sinn Feiners. But, like the Sinn Feiners, they hold that the Irish question is not a domestic British question but is first an Irish question and then a world question, and they appeal from England to the world for their country's freedom. They at least have proved by their sacrifices that hatred of England plays no part in their politics. Nor, indeed, is it hatred of England that makes other Irishmen republicans. "Ireland a republic" is a noble, not a base ideal. It is founded upon the passion for liberty—that passion which led a young French soldier on the eve of his death to write: "The true death would be to live in a conquered country." Irishmen at the present moment are in revolt against the shame of living in a conquered country. Republicanism is simply a determination to undo the conquest of Ireland. What Englishman who loves liberty can fail to wish well to the cause?

As for the Ulster difficulty, the truth is never told about it in the speeches of Cabinet ministers. They defend the continued coercion of Ireland on the ground that it would be wicked to coerce Ulster. Honest men would feel that it must at least be

Irish Soldiers! Irish Sailors! Irish Airmen!

SIGN

IRELAND'S CLAIM TO NATIONAL FREEDOM

should be referred to

THE PEACE CONFERENCE IN PARIS

to decide impartially upon the ancient issue between

IRELAND & GREAT BRITAIN

COMRADES!

Let every patriotic Irishman who has served against the Germans sign the PETITION to further the foregoing object. CLOSE UPON 250 IRISH OFFICERS HAVE ALREADY SIGNED. Comrades who have fallen in the War can be signed for by their next-of-kin or some near relative.

LET ALL DISCHARGED & DEMOBILISED IRISHMEN STICK TOGETHER.

Note.—The Petition may be seen and signed at the Offices of the IRISH NATIONALIST VETERANS' ASSOCIATION, College Park Chambers, 10 Nassau St. (first floor), Dublin.

Copies of the Petition will also be circulated for signature.

wickeder to coerce a nation than to coerce half-a-province of a nation. The truth is, however, Cabinet ministers have no moral objection whatever to coercing Ireland. If they have any objection to coercing Ulster, it is not on moral grounds but because Ulster provides them with a plausible palliation for their guilt in denying freedom to a race of white men. One cannot fairly be called unfair in making this grave charge. Those who know history know that the Ulster question is an invention of British statesmen. It did not exist in the eighteenth century when Ireland had a national Parliament. Ulster had then, as now, certain sectarian passions but she had no anti-national passions. She was as Nationalist as the American colonies. If she has been anti-national in recent years she has been so in close collusion with British statesmen. There has been no "Ulster" movement in our time that was not simply an affair of collusion with British statesmen. A writer in *The New Statesman* has suggested that, even in his latest post-war threat to levy war on the British Parliament, Sir Edward Carson was given his cue from inside the Cabinet. Sir Edward Carson has certainly never taken a step in the wildest days of his career without the knowledge that he was helping either British ministers or British ex-ministers to maintain their traditional policy. It is ludicrous for them to raise their hands helplessly at the obstacle of Carsonism. The obstacle of Carsonism was not only rapturously engineered but rapturously financed from London. Political Ulster was made in London, and it is gross hypocrisy to pretend that it is mainly an Irish problem. It is mainly an English problem, and English statesmen could solve it in five years by the simple magic of the will to set Ireland free.

But, it may be asked, "What about the principle

of self-determination in Ulster?" Well, personally, I am in favour of the fullest self-determination for Ulster in so far as it does not conflict with self-determination for Ireland. I believe that the future happiness of the world depends largely on the concession of self-determination to minorities. In the seventeenth century, people used to think it impossible to grant modified self-determination to religious minorities. They attempted to compel men to go to national churches in which they did not believe. To do otherwise, they thought, would be to destroy national unity. They discovered later that it was actually a help to national unity to admit the right of self-determination in religious matters to Catholics, Presbyterians, Baptists and Plymouth Brethren. In modern times, we have gone further. We have in matters of local government given a certain amount of self-determination to counties, rural districts and towns. The modern theory of education favours even a sort of self-determination for school children. We are losing the intolerable mechanical theory of sameness, and we no longer blind ourselves to the possibility of having communities within communities, States within States. We realise that that State is the freest which contains the greatest number of free societies and free individuals. Even the Imperialists have accepted in some degree this view of freedom. "Why, then," someone may say, "not 'go the whole hog' in the matter of self-determination and admit the right of a minority to secede from a nation altogether?" I confess I am on the side of those who ask this question. I hold that any homogeneous minority, desiring to secede, should be permitted to take its case before the League of Nations and, if it can substantiate it, should be allowed to "contract out" of the nation of which it is an unwilling

part. The difficulty about Ulster is that it is not homogeneous. The Nationalist minority in Ulster is greater proportionately than the Ulster minority in Ireland. How many Englishmen realise that, if we leave out the city of Belfast, there is actually a Nationalist majority in Ulster? 50·016 per cent. of the population outside Belfast are Catholic, while 49·084 per cent. are Protestant. These figures, however, are not quite fair to the Nationalists, for, while practically all the Catholics are Nationalists, a great number of the Protestants are not Unionists. Even if we take the four predominantly Unionist counties of Ulster—Cabinet ministers usually pretend that there are six—we shall find that at least 30 per cent. of the population is Nationalist. The entire Ulster Unionist population, on the other hand, is only about 20 per cent. of the population of Ireland. If we believe in self-determination, is it not juggling with the facts to pretend that the 20 per cent. minority of Carsonites has greater rights than the vast majority of Irishmen or than the Nationalist majority in Ulster outside Belfast or than the 30 per cent. Nationalist minority in Carsonite Ulster? If the Germans had held Belgium, they would have made use of the minority of pro-German Flemings exactly as Cabinet ministers make use of Ulster. During their occupation, indeed, they were already creating an "Ulster question" in Belgium. It is with make-shifts of this kind that Imperial statesmen fool the democracies.

What British statesmen have deliberately made of Ulster may be gathered, by contrast, by anyone who turns back to the records of the pro-Irish Ulster that existed when Ireland had a national Parliament. How many people realise that, in the days of Grattan's Parliament, Protestants and Catholics united in the Orange stronghold of Derry to celebrate the

Williamite defence of that city of which we have heard so much? In *The Siege and History of Londonderry*, edited by John Hempton, we find a significant account of the commemoration festivities held in Derry in the year 1788. One paragraph in especial shows that the Ulstermen of those days did not hate each other for their religious beliefs:

"At four o'clock" (runs the account) "the Mayor and Corporation, the Clergy, the Officers of the Navy and Army, the Roman Catholic Clergy, . . . etc., sat down to a plain but plentiful dinner in the Town Hall. . . . Religious dissensions, in particular, seemed to be buried in oblivion, and Roman Catholics vied with Protestants in expressing, by every possible mark, their sense of the blessings secured to them by our happy Constitution, and the cordial part they took in the celebrations of this joyful day.

All Ulstermen were Nationalists in those days. If Ulster did not develop along these lines of patriotism and tolerance, where can we lay the blame except on the Union and on the settled policy of Cabinet ministers in succeeding generations? Occasionally, an English statesman has drawn back in horror from the Frankenstein's monster of civil hatred his predecessors have created. But the traditional policy of Cabinets has been one of war on Irish patriotism and of rewards for Orange sectarianism. Few Ulster Unionist members have been allowed to go to their graves without some mark of Government esteem. Mr Lloyd George has but followed the tradition in heaping honours on the fomentors of anti-Irish strife. And yet he has the audacity to pretend that he finds Ulster an embarrassment!

The truth is Ulster is the Cabinet minister's "white hope." With the help of Ulster he will dare to

continue an Imperialist policy which would otherwise be universally recognised to be out of date in these days of the League of Nations. Only two states in Europe, I believe, now continue to call themselves Empires—the German and the British. And the British is the only one which claims to hold against its will a subject nation of white men. I confess I wish England and Germany would both abandon the name of Empire for that of Commonwealth. The denial of freedom, which seems normal in an Empire, would be seen to be an anomaly and an outrage in a Commonwealth. Apart from this, does it not strike the average Englishman as an appalling fact that, in a war for liberty, while the defeated empires ended perforce by setting their subject nations free, the victorious British Empire alone, though it fought on the side of liberty, claims the right to keep its subject nation subject still? Some Sinn Feiners at the beginning of the war declared that Ireland could be liberated only as a result of the defeat of the British Empire. Others of us denied this. We said that an England victoriously fighting for the right could be trusted to further Irish liberty better than a triumphant Germany. If Ireland is not given the same liberty as Bohemia, however, what argument is left to us of the pro-Ally faith? The ordinary Irishman will say that the history of the war proves that the only hope for a small subject nation lies in the defeat and overthrow of the empire of which it forms a part. Human nature being what it is, he will pray that wars may continue till Ireland is free. It is a terrible choice to thrust on a human being, if you tell him that the path to the liberty of his country necessarily lies through the disaster of a world-war. Yet what Englishman would not prefer a world-war rather than the destruction of English liberty? Surely it

is possible to form a society of nations, each of which will feel that in preserving the peace of the world it is preserving its own freedom. In any case, we may be sure of one thing. No peace of nations which violates the liberty of even one nation can last.

Luckily, more and more Englishmen have in recent years been coming to realise these things. They see that it is an outrage to pretend that Ireland alone among European countries has no right to be free. England has always been rich in chivalrous men, and a fine chivalry has lately modified the views on Ireland of many Unionists such as Lord Henry Cavendish Bentinck and Major Hills, as well as those of Liberals and Socialists. In this matter chivalry coincides with practical common-sense. Lord Northcliffe's campaign for making Ireland a dominion (with a difference) is the result not merely of sentimental but of statesmanlike considerations. His scheme is in some respects an advance on Asquithian Home Rule. But it suffers from the defect that it implies that England has the right to impose on Ireland a settlement other than Ireland herself desires. If Ireland by a referendum chose the Northcliffe scheme, that would alter the situation entirely. Personally, I believe that the only thing for England to do is to put the Home Rule Act into immediate operation, hold an Irish general election, summon the Home Rule Parliament, and leave the Irish representatives themselves to hammer out a Constitution for their country, republican or colonial, according to the national will. The greatest service England can do to Ireland is to evacuate it. Then, if I may adapt a saying of Kettle's, the two countries will not only be free but be free to be friends.

But, some one may once again ask, what about

Ulster? Well, Ulster may either come into the Irish Parliament and make terms or she may prefer a policy of passive resistance. First get the Irish national question settled, and we shall see. In any case, no Nationalist can, without deserting his principles, ask for the aid of English troops in compelling Ulster to make up her mind. And no Nationalist ever has, so far as I am aware, suggested the coercion of Ulster by British armed forces. Sane Irish Nationalists know that the happiness and unity of Ireland depend, not on the defeat of Ulster but on the persuasion of Ulster. They know, however, that the persuasion of Ulster will be impossible while the Lloyd Georges and the Bonar Laws incite Ulster to declare herself a separate nation. The persuasion of Ulster must in the first instance be begun by the two Front Benches in the House of Commons acting in unison. When British statesmen of all parties unite in a *bona-fide* declaration of Irish independence, the Ulster question will solve itself as if by a miracle. . . . And now, statesmen of England, the world waits.

1136